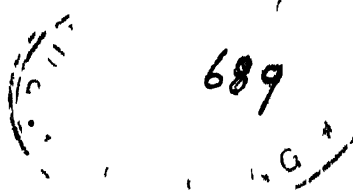


# THE DIARY OF A TURK

BY

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*CONTAINING EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS*

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TO THE MEMORY OF

E. F. W. GIBB

ORIENTAL SCHOLAR, AND THE AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF OTTOMAN POETRY"



## PREFACE

ALTHOUGH no Western Power has ever played a greater part in the problems of the Ottoman Empire than Great Britain, yet in no other country in Western Europe is Turkey more grossly misunderstood. I have been many times asked by my English acquaintances to write a book on Turkey from a Turkish point of view, and two ways of writing were suggested to me: the one was to compile a detailed work, the other to write a small and light book. To take the former advice was not possible to me, as I found myself incapable of producing a great and technical work. Besides, I thought that after all a small and lightly written volume would have a larger circle of readers, and by its help I could to some extent correct some of the mistaken ideas prevailing in England about Turkey. Therefore I began to write this little



volume in the form of a book of travel, and I now bring it out under the title of *The Diary of a Turk*. By this means I have been able to talk a little on many matters connected with Turkey. Let the critic find other points in this book on which to express his opinion, but do not let him charge me with ignorance of the fact that the somewhat unexciting experiences of an unknown man may be only of slight interest to the public.

In the chapter on women's affairs I have quoted a few paragraphs from two articles which I contributed some time ago to two London weeklies, the *Queen* and the *Lady*; I render my thanks to the Editors of these papers for kindly permitting me to reproduce them here.

H. H.



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# THE DIARY OF A TURK

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## CHAPTER I.

### MY HOME IN ASIA MINOR.

My Asiatic origin—My great-grandfather's religious order—His miracles—My grandfather and Sultan Mahmud II.—An ordeal by wine—My father's charitable extravagance—His death—Primitive surgery in Asia Minor—The original home of vaccination—My mother's European ancestors—Writing a forbidden accomplishment for women.

I WAS born in the ancient town of Angora, Asia Minor, famous not alone for its silky-haired cats and goats, but also for its historical and archaeological importance, and with it my memories of early days, and therefore the pages of my desultory journal, naturally begin. Men of learning who have engaged in researches into the archæology and biblical history of Asia



Minor have come to the conclusion that this town was once in the remote past the principal centre of a wandering branch of the Celtic peoples who ultimately settled in Asia Minor. Although, of course, it was conquered and held during later generations by the Eastern invaders, it is even nowadays noticeable that there is a difference, both of character and physique, between most of the inhabitants of our province and those of other provinces, more especially of Southern and Eastern Asia Minor. By remarking on this I do not wish to seem to be trying to trace my origin to a European race, though I am aware that many people in this country are unsympathetic, and even, perhaps, prejudiced, where Orientals are concerned. My paternal ancestors came across from Central Asia, and first settled in Khorasan, in Persia. But as they were devout followers of the orthodox creed of the Arabian Prophet they were subjected to the intolerant oppression of the Persian Moslems, between whom and the orthodox believers the history of Western Asia records many a sanguinary feud, the result of their doctrinal antagonism. My ancestors were compelled eventually to emigrate



to Asia Minor over a hundred and fifty years ago, and there they found a more hospitable reception. My great-grandfather was the sheikh or head of a religious order called *Halvati*, or, to give the name an English equivalent, "those who worship in seclusion." The name arises from one of the strict rules of the order, that its rites must not be displayed to the outside public, doubtless a measure for the prevention of hypocrisy. Historical research has traced the foundation of the order to Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed. Shortly after settling in Asia Minor the disciples of the great sheikh increased to a number approaching eighty thousand, and pilgrims came to his monastic dwelling from all the neighbouring provinces. It was not only in Anatolia and Syria that his name was honoured; he is mentioned with reverence in the books written in Egypt at that time. It must not be imagined that he was a kind of *Mahdi*, a name which is familiar in England on account of its having been assumed by the late pretender in the Soudan. In the days gone by many such Mahdis, or "redeemers," appeared in Western Asia and the Northern half of Africa, disguis-



ing under this apostolic name their ambition of attaining temporal power and worldly glory.

In spite of his having so great a number of disciples, my great-grandfather lived, together with his immediate devotees, in complete retirement. The Ottoman Sovereign of the time heard of him, and sent a messenger informing him that he wished to grant certain pious endowments to his monastic institution in the little town of Tcherkesh, which is situated half-way between Angora and the Black Sea coast. My great-grandfather declined to receive such unnecessary worldly assistance, and, according to one of the traditions concerning his miraculous doings which used to be related in our family circle, he struck his staff against the wall in the presence of the envoy of the sovereign, and thereupon a stream of precious metal began to flow down. He said to the envoy (who became a devoted disciple later on) that he needed not such worldly things. There is another anecdote of him which was told in my younger days. There was in our house a large deerskin upon which my father used to prostrate himself during his prayers. I often heard it said that this was the skin of the



deer upon which my great-grandfather, the holy hermit, was accustomed to ride every Friday, the Sabbath day of our people, from his home in Asia Minor to Mecca, in Arabia, to attend the Friday service in the sacred sepulchre of the Prophet (on whose shrine be blessing!). Of course, I quite believed these legends in my childhood. I can make no comment on them now. "The responsibility of vouching for the fact lies with the narrator," is an Arab saying often quoted by our Oriental historians in relating extraordinary events. I must follow their example. It has, however, always been a great grief to me that along with the deerskin we did not inherit that useful staff.

My grandfather, whose views in his early days on the religious orders did not coincide with those of his father, did not become a disciple of the great hermit-sheikh, so the latter had to point out to him that the rules of the order forbade his remaining any longer in the monastic institution. He left the place accordingly, and joined a small caravan which was starting off to the town of Angora, where he eventually settled. It was a distance of four days' journey on camel-back. This town was



the centre of learning at that time, and there is there a well-known shrine of a saint, whose name is Haji Beiram. Many thousands of pilgrims visit his mausoleum every year. My grandfather did not know anyone in the town, and had no means of supporting himself. He went to the shrine, and after making a prayer at the graveside of the saint, he became absorbed in contemplation and eventually slumbered. In his dream he saw the saint, who asked him his name, and also whether he could read. The answer to the second question was unsatisfactory, and thereupon the saint gave him a lesson. On waking up my grandfather went out and saw several students entering the adjacent *madrassah* or theological school. He followed them, and in the *madrassah* he entered into conversation with one of the newly-made lecturers. In these old-fashioned centres of learning the reputation of a lecturer depends in great measure on the number of students who attend his lectures. The lecturer took my grandfather, who was then little more than a boy, into his class, and settled him in a room along with his few other pupils. He studied in this *madrassah* very many years, and ulti-



mately became himself a professor of theology, philosophy, and the temporal law of the Moslems. He made his fame largely by delivering addresses in different mosques on the commentaries of the Koran, which attracted large audiences. Many learned men, engaged in kindred studies throughout Asiatic Turkey, used to apply to him for the solution of difficult points. The representative of the sovereign in this town used to pay him visits of respect, but he himself never in his life crossed the threshold of a government office.

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II., who ruled from 1808 till 1839, there took place an imperial wedding at Constantinople to which persons of distinction in all classes of society throughout the country were invited. The chief physician of the Sultan (whose grandson is at present attached as councillor to the Ottoman Embassy in London), who had been a pupil of my grandfather's, noticed that his name was not on the list, and strongly recommended his sovereign to invite him. A courier set out for Asia Minor at once, and brought my grandfather to the capital. A great banquet was given in the palace in



honour of the event to all the religious dignitaries and principal *Ulema*, that is to say, the learned hierarchy of the realm. Mahmud II. devised a curious plan for testing the fortitude and strength of character of these pious people. During the banquet servants brought in bottles filled with a red-coloured liquid. Several guards with drawn swords in their hands followed the attendants, and stood in the entrance. The bewildered guests naturally did not know what to make of it, and awaited events in anxious silence. Then, to their consternation, it was solemnly announced that the liquid in the bottles was wine. Wine! an abominable intoxicant, of which it is strictly forbidden to the faithful to touch even a single drop! The pernicious fluid, which has received from the Prophet himself the name of the "mother of evils"! (I must explain, by the way, that Mahmud wished to remodel his empire. After getting rid of those formidable opponents, the Janissaries, he adopted not only some of the European methods of administration, but also some of the Western customs and modes of life, and among other things he ordered his officials and army to wear costumes



and uniforms made after the European style. This policy had already occasioned disquietude and suspicion in the pious heads under turbans in Asia.) When the wine was brought before that religiously sober assembly, an announcement was made that "as the Sultan ruled on European soil he wished to bring his country more into harmony with the Franks (all the people of Western Europe are so called), and any unwillingness on the part of his subjects would possibly hasten the decay of his empire. It was, moreover, the desire of the sovereign that narrow-minded superstition and the dislike of new things, even though they were borrowed from the Franks, should disappear." The announcement was concluded by the warning that those guests who should refuse to drink wine would be regarded as rebellious against the will of their sovereign. Face to face with this somewhat startling alternative, the guests became pale of countenance and mute of tongue, for, be it remembered, he who gave this order was a real autocrat, who had even exterminated the awe-inspiring Janissaries. However, my grandfather sprang up from his seat and said, "Could not our sovereign find any other virtues



among the Franks worth imitating?" He pointed out, moreover, that the law against drinking wine, the ordinance of the faith, was given to them by an authority superior even to that of his Majesty. He then started to go out, and while he was forcing his way through the servants and guards, Sultan Mahmud, who was watching this comedy literally from behind the scenes, suddenly stepped in smiling, and, in order to dispel the fear of the white-bearded, green-turbaned gentlemen, he said he simply meant to test the fortitude and character of the people who were to guide his subjects in the paths of religion and rectitude.

The Sultan later granted an audience to my grandfather, and asked him to give lessons in the Arabic language to the imperial princes (among whom was Abdul Mejid, who was Sultan during the Crimean campaign), and urged him to settle in Constantinople, promising that he would eventually make him Sheikh-ul-Islam, that is, the head of the religious magistrates and learned hierarchy. But my grandfather prayed the sovereign to pardon him for not accepting this honour, saying that it was his earnest desire to pass his remaining



days of life in retirement and study. He only requested one boon—that he might be granted the vacant headship of the *madrasseh* or college in which he had studied for so many years, and with this, the enjoyment of the lands devised to it by the Crown.

When my grandfather had returned to his own town, Sultan Mahmud, who understood and appreciated his quiet contentment, wrote out with his own hand a saying of the Prophet, had it illuminated, and sent it to him as a present. Roughly translated it runs as follows:—"The Lord loveth the man of learning who is pious, contented, modest and retiring." Subsequently, too, he granted my grandfather's request, and, as an additional clause to the endowment, he made a provision that these lands should be inherited as real estate by his posterity, provided that they should, after attaining the age of twenty years, qualify themselves by an examination before the proper authorities on those subjects in which he was himself so well versed. The royal firmans, with the imperial signature on them, beautifully written on the finest vellum, are still in the possession of our family. These lands came down to me and to



my brothers, but, in spite of all provisions to the contrary, they were confiscated during the reign of the present Sultan, a reign which has been so conspicuous for the suppression of the civil rights and the oppression of the person of the individual.

We sued the Government to get our property back, and spent all our money in different courts over lawsuits which lasted fifteen years, but we could not have expected to succeed, for, as a Turkish poet has written,—

When the judge is the defendant and the witnesses are bought,

How can you look for justice from the interested court?

When my grandfather died at the age of eighty-two my own father inherited the endowed estate; he was not so learned and able as his father. His only brother, having entered into the Government service, forfeited his share. My father suffered from an excess of charity, and in helping others he expended the greater portion of the revenue of his own estate as well as a part of my mother's private income. His charitable extravagance became at length so inordinate that he could not even dine without inviting every day many guests, no matter



whether their position was humble or the reverse. When he died, killed by the murderous attack of a drunken Government official, he left us practically nothing but the endowed lands, which he could not have sold, and these lands, as I pointed out before, were taken over by the Government of the present Sultan. We were relieved from want by the fact that the bulk of my mother's property remained intact. Fortunately my father had not been able to squander it.

I was nine years old when the drunken official attacked him, and so caused his death, which happened thus :—One evening a few women visitors came to call on my mother. As it is our custom in the East to keep our women strictly secluded, my father had to retire before these veiled visitors entered. He asked me to come out with him to spend the evening with some neighbouring friends, and there we saw the intoxicated man. My father had a very great abhorrence of drunkenness and drunkards, and he could not bear to be in the same room with the man, who was violently drunk and shouting and singing. A quarrel arose between them. The man attacked my father,



and caught him by his long white beard. My father pushed the assailant back, and in doing so accidentally put his thumb into the drunkard's mouth, with the result that he was badly bitten. Although Asia Minor was the cradle of some of the ancient civilisations, it has not profited from the facilities afforded to mankind by modern discoveries. There was no surgeon in our town properly qualified by scientific training, and so my father's thumb lacked proper treatment.

The only medical men were, as a rule, barbers, who added to their proper profession that of letting blood for their customers when it was considered necessary. Bleeding of course used to be in favour in Europe generally, and it is still largely practised in the East. There are a great many people in my native country who think that a periodical loss of blood purifies the system, and have themselves bled accordingly. The early part of the summer is a favourite time for the operation, before the season for eating fresh fruit arrives. Blood is let either by a lancet, or else by means of leeches which are applied to the arms and legs. The men who were charged with my father's treatment were



an old barber and a professional blood-letter. They used all their choicest ointments, making my father's thumb worse every day. They used to criticise each other's skill in surgery. The professional blood-letter told us that he was once an army surgeon, and it was his boast that during the Crimean War he had cut off the arms and legs of dozens of wounded soldiers. He doubtless facilitated the departure of these unfortunates to the place whither he ultimately sent my father. In spite of his experiences, however, he did not amputate my parent's arm, which might have prevented the gangrene which proved fatal. My mother's efforts to obtain the condemnation of the drunken official, as the murderer of her husband, failed. He was only sentenced to a few months of imprisonment, and to pay us an indemnity of about five hundred pounds.

Perhaps I shall be pardoned for a slight digression here. I laid some emphasis on the backward condition of the art of surgery in my native town, but I do not mean thereby that Turkey has been altogether behindhand in the art of medicine. In some particulars she has even led the way. For instance, she



may claim the discovery of inoculation as a defence against smallpox, and it is worth while recalling the fact that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu introduced the treatment into England from Turkey many years before Jenner made his first experiment. As Lady Mary saw it, inoculation was performed with lymph taken from human beings, but according to the *Tarikhi Jevdet* (vol. ii., p. 341, press mark Turk. 9, British Museum Library), inoculation was also performed in a manner suggestive of calf-lymph. A Turkoman of the pastoral tribes in Asia Minor was paying a visit to Constantinople, and he saw the children being inoculated with other children's lymph. He said that in his own country the lymph was taken from the fingers of those who milked the cows. The book, moreover, states that Lady Mary heard of the Turkoman's statement, though she does not mention this in her letter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Writing to England from Adrianople on April 1, 1717, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu says:—

"Apropos of distempers, I am going to tell you a thing that I am sure will make you wish yourself here. The smallpox, so fatal and so general amongst us, is here entirely harmless by the invention of ingrafting, which is



The Circassians and some of the tribes of Caucasus are said to have been acquainted with the uses of inoculation in olden days. They were chiefly slave-dealers, and they had to take great care of their young girl-captives, more especially as regarded any sort of disfigurement

the term they give it. There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the smallpox; they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together) the old woman comes with a nutshell full of the matter of the best sort of smallpox and asks what veins you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch), and puts into the vein as much venom as can lie upon the head of her needle, and after binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell, and in this manner opens four or five veins . . . . The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day, and are in perfect health until the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, or seldom three. They have rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark; and in eight days' time they are as well as before their illness. . . . There is no example of anyone that has died in it; and you may well believe I am very well satisfied of the safety of the experiment, since I intend to try it on my little son.

"I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England."



which would destroy their good looks, and consequently their value. Of the early history of the sickness little is known, but it is a well-established fact that the symptoms were first clearly diagnosed by the ancient Arab physician, Rhazes, whose name is well known to Orientalists and students of medical history. His book is entitled *Kitab-ul-Jederee Vcl-Hassabeh*, the translation of which is *Treatise of Smallpox and Measles*. This work was translated into English from a Latin version by T. Stark early in the eighteenth century.

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The business-like European manner of investing money is not known among our people. Those who do not know what to do with their spare money, and who fear it may be stolen, or kindly taken charge of by the officials of the paternal Sultan, hide their cash by burying it in corners of their houses or fields. But we did not hide the five hundred pounds belonging to my mother. Someone suggested to us that we should buy mohair goats, of which the hair, cut every spring, would yield us an annual income.



This was a little after the Russo-Turkish War, and in the consequent depression of trade even the silky-haired, valuable Angora goat was to be cheaply bought. We purchased three hundred of these animals. But misfortunes never come alone. In a year's time a disease broke out among the greater part of the animals in our province, and almost all our goats died. My mother, in her simple faith, attributed this to kismet, and consoled herself and us accordingly.

My mother is a woman of tact and great natural intelligence, but owing to the backward condition of women in the East, due to their surroundings, her intelligence has not had the benefit of culture. She is, of course, a fatalist, and she believes all she is told by her religious teachers, who are not very learned themselves. She is not ignorant ; on the contrary, she was in her time the most well-read woman of our town. Indeed, so far was she in advance of the other ladies, that they used to visit her for the purpose of hearing her read aloud from the books of sacred legends and hymns which are their principal literature. She cannot write at all. This perhaps requires some explanation.



Formerly girls in Turkey were not allowed to learn the mystery of caligraphy. We have had some excellent poetesses in days gone by, but none of them could write—they dictated their inspirations. The common explanation given of this traditional prohibition—for it is a custom rather than a rule—was that if girls once learned writing they might have indulged in talismanic pastimes, and eventually have become witches. As a matter of fact, the real reason was quite different. There was a fear, perhaps not ill-founded, that having once learned to write they might hasten to make use of the accomplishment by composing love-letters to young men with whom they could not otherwise communicate, for the strict seclusion of females cuts off all intercourse between young people of opposite sexes almost as soon as they have ceased to be infants. This absurd, in fact harmful, prohibition has of late, and for some time past, been losing its force. But it was still strictly observed in my mother's younger days, and so she was not allowed to learn to write. In spite, however, of her incomplete education, she kept us happy, and by her inborn tact preserved the appearance



of our social standing. All members of my mother's family have a practical business-like instinct, a quality which is so conspicuously lacking in those Turks who have no strain of foreign blood. I am convinced that there is some European blood in the veins of my mother's ancestors. She belongs to a family of soldiers who for generations were charged by the Ottoman Sultans with the defence of the provinces and the frontiers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In those days the Turks used to make slaves of their captives in war, just as their enemies used to carry Turks into permanent captivity when invading their territory. The antecedents of the people so enslaved can be traced even now in Hungary and Austria by their Turkish names. But the captives of the Turks, as a rule, had to adopt Turkish names, and so the presence of European blood can only be determined in Turkey by the personal appearance and characteristics of the descendants of the captives. My mother's soldier-ancestors doubtless intermarried with European captives. I before disclaimed all pretensions or desire to pass myself off as a descendant of a European race when I was de-



scribing the Asiatic origin of my forefathers. I am not, nevertheless, contradicting myself here ; for when the pedigree of a person is being considered with us, it is only his ancestry on the father's side that counts.

My mother passes a most retired life in her town and summer houses. In town there is a market-place situated a few minutes' distance from our house, which she has never seen in her whole life. She went, however, to Mecca on a pilgrimage some five years ago.



## CHAPTER II.

### AT SCHOOL AND IN THE HAREM.

My hatred of lessons—Compulsory attendance at school—  
The bastinado in schools—My own experience of it—  
How schoolgirls are punished—The old-fashioned  
implement for beating—"The rod is a gift from  
Heaven"—I help to kidnap a bride—My mother's  
grief at my behaviour—I am handed over to a stern  
uncle in consequence—My uncle's wives—Etiquette  
in the harem—A first cigarette—Bastinado again—I  
am shut out of the harem—The practice of polygamy—  
Its popularity estimated—The European system.

"PARADISE is beneath the ground over which  
mothers walk," said Prophet Mohammed.  
This saying is to be thus construed: "If any  
man desires to gain paradise, let him obey and  
respect his mother." This precept I was  
taught to follow from my earliest childhood.  
But I fear I must be destined for some place  
other than paradise, for when I was a boy I  
frequently gave my mother much trouble and



caused her great and many anxieties, for I found my conduct free from masculine control after my father's death, and made good, or bad, use of my opportunities. I was a child of unthinking and reckless nature. I had an intense horror of going to any school. At our summer residence I owned a flock of geese, and I loved to spend my time looking after them. I was therefore given the nickname of 'goose-herd,' which is tantamount in Turkish to 'idiot.' In our town-house I trained and reared pigeons, and I must say I had some excuse for this, as I have never seen such beautiful birds elsewhere. They were very small, and of a pure white hue. They would fly to an extraordinary altitude, and would remain out of sight for several hours. At other times they would suddenly let themselves fall, swooping and wheeling in mid-air, and then shoot upwards once more. Birds of this most intelligent and trainable breed have been frequently taken to Constantinople, but they cannot live in the climate of that town.

While I was wasting my time with dumb companions, my eldest brother and cousins were quite able to read and write, things which



to my mind were absolutely past comprehension and belief. Unable to compel me to attend any school, my mother at last applied to an old negro servant of my grandfather's, who was then living close to us with his white wife and tawny children. When a boy he had been bought by my grandfather from the slave-dealers, and as the emancipation of slaves is considered the most pious act a Mohammedan can perform, my grandfather freed him soon after buying him, gave him some property, and arranged a marriage for him. This old man did not approve of my undutiful conduct towards my mother. In accordance with a promise which he willingly made to her, one morning he came to our house and gravely asked me to go with him to school. I excused myself on the plea that the books and papers previously procured for me had been eaten by rats. He said he would buy new ones for me in the school, and I told him it was no use buying them, because I did not understand them. Then the big black man, showing his white teeth angrily, moved towards me, and caught me by the ear with his rough, hard hand, and practically dragged me as far as the school,



amidst the malicious chuckling of my brother and cousins. During lesson-times my thoughts flew after my geese and pigeons. Many a time was I led to school most unwillingly in the same fashion, and it took several months for the master to persuade me, by much corporal chastisement, to take the slightest interest in my lessons.

After a year or so I had to go to a higher school, where there were hundreds of boys, several teachers, and a headmaster of ruthless disposition. In those days flogging was the principal punishment for all offences of school-boys. I have never seen or heard of any master who carried out his duty of not sparing the rod more conscientiously, more unbendingly, and with more self-satisfaction than that headmaster. Personally, however, I came off more easily than most, as during the two years of my attendance in the school I was only beaten three times. The beating took the usual form of bastinado, and in my three experiences I received fifty strokes on the soles of my feet, twenty of them for my ill-behaviour, fifteen for my stupidity, and fifteen for my incapacity to learn arithmetic. I had on several occasions



played mischievous schoolboy tricks, which would have brought upon me many a flogging had I not been careful enough to hoodwink the watchful eyes of the headmaster and his attendants. But on the occasion when I received my twenty strokes, I was detected while rather irreverently playing pranks during prayer-time. It was the custom for the headmaster to take all the boys every afternoon to a special hall for prayer, and to conduct the service personally. In our places of worship people prostrate themselves by laying their foreheads on the floor, while they repeat again and again the name of Allah ; everyone should then disengage his thoughts from all earthly things and fix them "on heaven." The whole service does not last more than fifteen minutes, and one prostration only lasts about a minute. One day, when the whole congregation were prostrate, I quickly got up and collected the fezzes of the boys who were near me, piled them in a heap, and at once re-prostrated myself. When the service was over, it was observed that several boys were bareheaded. The master was informed of the crime that had been committed, for a Mussulman always prays with covered head,



and a searching inquiry began. One of the boys, who was a friend of mine, while going before the master to be interrogated, could not refrain from laughing at the remembrance of the fun. The master at once ordered his attendants to pull the boy down to be beaten. Seeing that my friend was crying, I went to the master and swore that the boy was innocent. "How do you know?" he asked me. "Because he was next to me during the service; I should have observed him," said I. Then several boys got up and told the master that the boy was not at my side during the service, thus contradicting me unanimously. Whereupon two attendants were ordered to pull me down and hold my legs tightly. The master then gave me twenty fierce blows on my feet, which made me lame for several days. This was the last flogging I had in the school.

It may perhaps be of interest if I give some description of our methods of corporal punishment in schools, which are still, even the primitive ones, employed by some masters in the provinces. In our old schools there were two kinds of flogging—one for the girls and the other for the boys. Girls used to be beaten



on the palms of their hands. There used to be an instrument in each school which was called the *flaka*. This was a long thick stick, to which was fastened a loop. The girl's wrists were fastened to the stick by means of twisting the loop round it, and the stick was held up by a person at either end. Then the master (there were no schoolmistresses), standing in front, used to inflict the punishment with a thin hard rod. The number of the strokes usually varied between five and ten. Laziness, much talking, and mischievous behaviour were the principal offences which brought about this punishment. As I remarked before, boys used to be beaten on their feet—sometimes on the soles of their boots, in graver cases without them, and even sometimes without their socks. The boys had to be pulled down, and two persons held up their feet, and the master used to strike the feet with a thick rod. The number of blows only exceeded twenty in the case of a very bad offence, and flogging on the bare feet was generally the result of the master finding something inside the culprit's boots or socks to mitigate the force of the blows. It often happened that the boys, foreseeing their fate,



used to place between their feet and socks such things as cotton handkerchiefs, and pieces of sheepskin. I remember I did not cry when I was beaten for the first time, as I thought it was very cowardly to cry in the presence of so many boys. But a boy who was sitting next to me said, "You silly! why did you not cry?" He then told me that each time he knew he was likely to be punished he placed some soft stuff inside his socks at once, and while he was being beaten cried out for mercy as loudly as possible. He said he made the master reduce the number of strokes by this plan.

In the old preparatory mixed schools there used to be another method of keeping children in order, which, I must admit, was decidedly barbarous. Those elementary schools for children consisted only of a large hall with two galleries in it. The smaller gallery was occupied by the master, and there he summoned the children in groups of two or three at a time to come and say their lessons. There was no division into classes. The larger gallery was used for the girls, the boys occupying the middle of the hall. Although the little scholars used to have low benches before them, they



had to sit on the floor, each boy or girl having his or her own mattress or sheepskin, which the parents had to provide, to sit upon. Now the master used to have hanging on the wall by his side a long stick whose length was always in proportion to the size of the hall—that is to say, it reached from one end of the room to the other. Whenever the master observed any of his pupils not behaving well and not doing their work, he often did not take the trouble to call the delinquent up before him, but simply took down the long heavy rod, held it up by its thick end, and, with the thin end, struck at any part of his victim he could reach—head, shoulders, or back. Sometimes, if this did not do, he would poke them in the ribs instead. This punishment was very common in all the elementary schools in my time, and was not peculiar to our province, but practised throughout the country. I cannot remember whether I suffered under the long pole in my childhood, but I imagine I did not, as the masters of these schools used to spare the children of well-to-do people for fear of annoying their parents, and thus forfeiting the chance of getting a better fee.

The bastinado is regarded in England as a



practice of peculiar barbarity, but in Turkey the belief in its good effects still largely prevails. "The rod is a gift from heaven" is a common saying in our language. This means that flogging inspires a desire in refractory people to do right. I do not propose to enter into any argument on the merits or demerits of this subject. I consider personally that a beating which is well-deserved and reasonably inflicted often effects a marvellous improvement in a lawless character, awakes the sluggish conscience of ruffians, and tames unmanageable boys. It is doubtful, however, if it is very effective in inducing children at school to learn their lessons.

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About the beginning of a summer season it was considered that I had been at the school in my native town long enough. I was then fourteen years old. My mother was looking forward to the arrival of the time when she could send me to Constantinople to complete my term of study. I left the school when summer had begun, and we went to our country-house to spend the summer.



Angora, our native place, has a well-deserved reputation throughout Asia Minor for its varied and extensive fruit-gardens. Almost all the families residing there have their own gardens a few miles outside the town, and most of them have their summer residence in the midst of their gardens. Three streams, flowing from different directions, join just below the town, and the valleys of these streams are covered with either fruit-trees or vineyards. Towards the beginning of May people begin to transport their provisions, furniture, and other household necessities in ox-waggon from the town-houses to the garden-cottages. They reside in the country five or six months, according to when the final harvesting of the autumn fruits takes place. The women and children stay in the country, and most of the men go to the town for their business every day before the heat of the sun becomes too great, and come back in the cool of the evening about sunset. In the middle of the day no one but hardy villagers can travel, for the heat of our climate is as excessive in summer as the cold is severe in winter. The journeys are made on horses, mules, and donkeys.



Like most children I used to feel an intense pleasure in getting away from the town at the beginning of the summer season, but this was not so much on account of my dislike of the town life as of my joy in getting rid of the horrors of pens and paper, and of the worrying schoolmaster. In addition to all the usual country pastimes, such as riding, swimming in the river, shooting, and fishing (which consists principally with us of what is known in England as 'tickling' fish, by putting the hands into the holes under willows which serve as lairs for fish, and grasping and throwing the prey on to the bank), I had a reprehensible way of amusing myself which is also not unknown to English boys. This was boldly trespassing into our neighbours' gardens to get fruit, an amusement which shocked my poor mother's feelings fearfully. I used to plunder more for the sake of the adventure than of eating the plundered fruit, as our own garden was the best, and our fruit was the envy of the neighbourhood.

During that summer I spent months on our country estate immune from the punishment I deserved, but at last I committed a crime which could not be overlooked by my people. I



helped a lovesick swain, who had been refused, to carry off his lady-love *vi et armis*. Before I begin to relate the incident I should like to remark that the habit of marriage by abduction was not originally Turkish. It was introduced into Asia Minor by the Caucasian emigrants, and used to be occasionally practised by people of Circassian origin. Almost all Circassian marriages take place through kidnapping. It is the custom for a Circassian to carry off his bride, whether the families of both parties find the match suitable or not. It is expected that he shall prove his bravery by taking this step, and if he is considered by the 'girl's people to be a fitting suitor, things may afterwards be arranged in a friendly manner ; if not, it becomes a question of honour, which ends in feud, and often in bloodshed. With our people this practice is viewed almost, with horror, and my complicity in the affair I have referred to was considered by everyone a very grave misdemeanour.

In the kidnapping expedition in which I was implicated the members of the girl's family could not venture to fight to regain her, as the lover's family was stronger in male relations and friends, while on the other hand, to appeal to



the law would cause them endless worries and expense. The abducted bride's people were by no means socially superior to those of the bridegroom, but they had refused the regular demand for marriage. The girl was born of a Circassian mother, and I believe she must have inherited the instinct of her race. She wished to marry her lover, so she managed to send word to him that she would appear in the garden adjacent to her house at an hour previously fixed. The expedition was composed of three men—myself, the lover, and a powerfully built man of Circassian descent, who had the best horse under him and who had to carry the girl. We started from our neighbourhood at dark, and after an hour and a half's ride on the main road we took a side-way on approaching the country residence of the girl's people. We tied up our horses to trees, and while creeping through the thickly planted fruit-gardens as quietly as possible, we saw someone moving, wrapped in a long white cloak. It was the girl, and she was shivering, even on that warm summer evening, when we approached her, and our big companion took her on his shoulders. The lover looked, it seemed to me, at this moment



hopelessly stupid, possibly by reason of his mingled feelings of joy and anxiety. We went back to the place where our horses were. The captured bride was mounted on the big Circassian's horse, holding tightly to the man's shoulders. We started, and on regaining the main road we had to ride with moderate speed, as the girl could not stand the strain of violent galloping. The bridegroom and I were constantly looking behind, anticipating pursuit and a possible attempt at recapture. I was armed with a flint pistol and a club, formidably decorated with a cluster of nails at the thick end. We took the girl to the bridegroom's residence, where his people gave her the kindest possible reception, and where she was duly married to him next day.

On hearing of my share in this adventure my mother was overwhelmed with grief and indignation. However, I considered that I acted quite rightly in the matter, and that in helping on the marriage of a suffering fellow-man, which subsequently turned out admirably, I did a piece of good work.

The end of the autumn of this year was approaching, and we prepared to transfer our



residence from the country to our town-house. My uncle, who represented our town in the short-lived Ottoman Parliament in Constantinople, had returned from that city just at the same time, the said Parliament having been prorogued indefinitely by the present Sultan, and he had decided to reside in Angora for some time. Hearing all about my conduct, he asked my mother to send my luggage to his house, so that I might live among his own children, and pursue my studies under his personal supervision. My mother, whose gentle soul had been much disturbed by my countless misdeeds, instead of being glad to see me go away, when she might find a little peace, sobbed on seeing my luggage removed from her house. My uncle, as I inferred before, was the first man in our family to enter the service of the Government. After acting as Judge in the quasi-religious Mohammedan Courts of Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo, Medina and Mecca, and other centres of the Ottoman empire, for nearly forty years, he retired temporarily from the Government service. Although thoroughly honest, sober, and pious in the extreme, he had fallen into some of the old failings and habits



of Constantinople officialdom, such as polygamy. When I went to his house he had three wives, all living together with their numerous children and many female attendants, in his harem—that is to say, in the ladies' section of his house. His wives were all Circassians. He bought, emancipated, and married them at different times, and, unlike some other polygamists, he kept them in one house. It was as wonderful as uncommon to see how they all obeyed him implicitly; and though a man of the sternest disposition, he treated them all kindly and with perfect fairness. They may have hated one another at heart, but etiquette and a strict ceremony of precedence were always observed by them. The children of the different wives were more markedly jealous of each other than were their mothers. Before marrying these three Circassian wives my uncle had been married to a lady in whose lifetime he could not take advantage of the existence of the system of polygamy, because she was the daughter of a family of social distinction.

I lived in my polygamist uncle's harem nearly two years. There was a marked con-



trast between our own home life and that of my uncle's tumultuous abode. The children of his wives quarrelled with one another, his servants quarrelled with each other. Each wife looked after the comfort of her apartments and her own children. I was not attached to the department of any one of them, and felt very unhappy. In every boyish dispute the sons united and turned against me, and I was quite naturally envious of the affection lavished on them by their respective mothers. My uncle, though he treated me on a perfect equality with his own sons, was very strict. He gave us no rest, I lost all my former amusements. We had to occupy ourselves continually either with lessons or with the prayers which he conducted five times a day in a large hall. The morning prayers, which have to be made about an hour before sunrise, annoyed me more than the others, as every day my uncle used to get up and go round knocking at the door of every bedroom, both in the harem and in the men's quarter, compelling everyone to get up for the early prayer. To have to get up and perform my prayer ablution on cold winter mornings often made me complain in



terms that were hardly pious. Anyone among the numerous boys, girls, and servants who failed in getting ready for the prayer without being able to plead serious illness was sure to receive the bastinado or whip from my stern uncle. On several occasions, like his own sons, I also received punishment. Feeling depressed in his house, I secretly started smoking, which is strictly prohibited for boys in my country. One of the sons, who disliked me much, one day spied on me, and informed his father that I was enjoying cigarettes in the stable in company with the groom, who bought and kept them for me, and shared them with me. My uncle sent two stalwart servants to catch me. They brought me before him, and he ordered them to take off my shoes and socks and hold my legs up. He gave me twenty strokes on my bare feet, and they hurt me so much that I howled for a long time afterwards. However, the punishment had its effect, for till within the last two years I have never been able to enjoy smoking.

One of my uncle's strictest orders was that his sons and I should remain on the men's side of the house every evening to read and write



our lessons, and not retire to our rooms in the harem to bed until after the evening prayer, which takes place about ten o'clock. After I had been living in his harem some months, one night, at the moment when we were all preparing to go to bed, my uncle asked me to stop, and informed me, in his own grave manner, that as I was entering upon the stage of manhood, it was time that I should respect the rule of seclusion. According to this rule, a man can no longer live among the ladies of the harem, between whom and himself marriage would be legal. So the sons of my uncle retired to the harem, leaving me behind in the men's quarter of the house. I went to the room assigned to me, and found all my belongings had been brought out there. I have a vivid recollection of the depression and sadness I felt that night. I was not quite fifteen then. I wished to run away to our own house and throw myself into the arms of my mother, but I knew it was quite hopeless, as I had been legally placed under the guardianship of my uncle alone. Moreover, he was too powerful a man to be resisted, and his voice was supreme in all matters connected with our family circle.



Seeing the hopelessness of my case, I wept long that solitary night. The reason which necessitated my dismissal from my uncle's harem was that he had two daughters of about my own age. Some people, including my own mother, used to design one of them for my future wife, though I did not then appreciate the blessing of matrimony, nor had the girl the least liking for me. It is a curious fact that when there is such a scheme to marry two young people in the future, and even when they are actually engaged, their separation, instead of being relaxed, is more rigidly enforced.

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While on the subject of my uncle's harem, it will not perhaps be amiss if I say something about the practice of polygamy in general. Much has been written in English about the Islamic polygamy, but little that is correct and authoritative, for those who are not Mohammedans are unreasonably prejudiced against it. Having more than one wife is not a Turkish, but a Moslem custom. Among the races of the Islamic faith the Turks indulge in polygamy least. Scratch those unprincipled



officials in Constantinople who may be polygamists, and you will find in them more foreign than Osmanli blood. There are many reasons for the justification of the plurality of wives in the Islamic books. I will give one of these reasons, which is historical. Before the time of Mohammed some Arab tribes, in order to check the increase of the female sex, used to bury alive some of their, so to say, 'surplus girls.' The appearance of Islam stamped out this most savage custom. After the foundation of Mohammedanism many sanguinary religious wars took place between Islamites and non-Islamites of Arabia, and a great number of men died in the battles. Therefore many women were left without husbands or unmarried. In those days this caused the increase of prostitution to an alarming degree, and this is a great 'crime' according to the Mohammedan law. Every fair-minded and impartial Christian will admit that Mohammed established many humane and just principles for his followers, and it might be expected that such a wise man would not have sanctioned the practice of polygamy. But what could have been done with those 'surplus women' in an age when



women's services were not of any public good to the community? How could he check the "crime" of immorality? He had to permit the exercise of polygamy, which was the usual practice among other Semitic peoples; and he sanctioned a man's marrying two, three, or even four wives, according to his capability in health, wealth, and just treatment of them. "With the change of times laws must be altered," says a general rule of Islamic law. But polygamic law did not change. Some wealthy and influential rulers and persons have always favoured it. What surprises me most in this respect is the injudicious criticism of polygamy by some Europeans. Are there not many men in Europe who, besides their lawful wife at home, have paramours elsewhere? This is worse than the polygamy of the Moslem Orient, as in the one case the plurality of female companions of life has a legal aspect, and the issue of the union is considered legitimate, while, on the other hand, the unfortunate offspring of the *union libre* of Europe are disinherited outcasts, and their mothers can at any moment be thrown into prostitution.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE HAREM AND WOMEN IN THE EAST.

True meaning of the word harem—Eastern houses divided into two parts—Male members of the family only allowed to enter the female quarter—Seclusion of women stricter among the well-to-do—Seclusion not wholly due to religion of Islam—Life in the harem—Occupations of its inmates—Misrepresentation of the system in England—<sup>1</sup>Royal harems—Custom doomed to disappear—Circassian women—Reasons for their popularity as wives—How a woman gets engaged—Some marriage customs—Marriage a more civil proceeding than religious—The bridegroom—His too friendly friends—Shopping in the harems—Female pedlars—Some of them Europeans—A considerable trade.

' THERE are many people in England whose ideas on the subject of the harem are but a confused misconception, based on what they may have heard about Eastern polygamy. In this chapter, that I may correct these mistaken conceptions, I will give some more exact



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information on the subject of the harem and its inmates, as well as on the position of women in Turkey in general.

Although the word harem is known and used by the people of Western Europe, the true meaning of the term is understood by but few persons in this country. As a matter of fact, many subjects concerning the East are much misunderstood in the West, just as there are certain manners and customs of Western Europe that cause prejudice in the Eastern mind. When an Englishman uses the word harem, he means thereby the numerous wives whom a man in our part of the East is supposed to shut up in his house. He, moreover, believes that every man in the Mohammedan East may marry as many women as he pleases. This idea is not only mistaken, but grotesque. There are thousands of men who would consider themselves fortunate if they could marry even a single woman ; while, on the other hand, there are thousands who would be happy to get rid of the single wife they have. Any man who can manage to keep two, not to say more, wives in peace, and can cope with the requirements of each, must be an exceptionally brave



person. Wives are not all religiously obedient in the East, just as all men are not tyrants. Religion, law, and custom impose upon men many duties to be discharged towards their wives. An honest man must discharge these duties, and indeed it is very difficult to find many men who are able to fulfil their obligations as husbands towards more than one wife. It has been proved that in many parts of the Ottoman empire the number of women does not exceed that of men, a fact which alone is enough to show the absurdity of the notion prevailing in England about the plurality of wives in that country. As a matter of fact, there is no law against the practice of polygamy, but the feeling of decent people condemns it. A man who is once married to a gentleman's daughter would find it no light matter to add another wife to his home circle. There are nowadays many men of Western education who marry in order to find a life-companion, and they quite understand that were they so injudicious as to take another wife, they would very likely render their lives the reverse of peaceful.

After pointing out the absurdity of the notion



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that a man's harem is his collection of wives, I will now explain what it really is.

III. Mohammedan countries, where the seclusion of women is a deeply rooted and religiously observed custom, every house is divided into two separate parts. In Turkey the section of a house where the ladies reside is called the *harem*, and the men's portion is named the *selamlık*—that is to say, the reception-place. Though the female inmates of a house are also collectively called the harem, this does not mean that they are all the wives of the master of the house. A man's wife, his mother, his sister, his daughter, and such other women as may lawfully appear unveiled in his presence, all belong to his harem.

The male members of a family who are permitted to enter the harem are the master of the house, his sons, his father, his father-in-law, and his wife's brother. In large cities such as Constantinople, Smyrna, and Adrianople, the advanced class of people may even permit their more distant relatives to enter. Those who adopt European customs may even admit their intimate friends. But in the old-fashioned families, such as form the great bulk of the



population, no male relation of the master is allowed to enter the harem portion of his house after he has reached his thirteenth or fourteenth year if marriage between such male relation and the master's daughter, or other young marriageable inmates of his house, be possible.

The restrictions are greater in the house of the well-to-do. In these houses, all communication, and sending and receiving parcels and dishes between the inmates of the harem and male members of the household, are effected through a kind of turning cupboard. This contrivance is fixed in a hole in the wall which separates the harem apartments from the men's quarter. As another measure to ensure the seclusion of women, to the windows of all harems is fastened a lattice; so while the inmates can see everything outside from behind this barrier, no man in the neighbouring streets, gardens, and houses can see them. As boys above the age of thirteen or fourteen are not allowed to see any women except those very near relatives I have enumerated, so girls, after the same age, must not appear unveiled in the presence of men, excepting their very near relatives; and if they have been attending



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mixed schools, they will then be taken away ; if they go to girls' schools, they must go there, as anywhere else, carefully veiled. It must not be supposed that the veils used are similar to the light veils used by the ladies in this country. A woman must go out wrapped from head to foot in a long cloak, somewhat resembling a sheet.

The seclusion of women cannot be wholly attributed to the precepts of the religion of Islam. In the time of Prophet Mohammed, and for generations after, women used to accompany the armies to the battlefield, singing stirring melodies to encourage the fighting men, and tending those who were wounded. Even nowadays among the tribal people, such as nomadic Arabs, and among the Circassians, there is no such absurdly strict seclusion of women as is fostered by the harem system ; yet those primitive people are much more earnestly devoted to that religion than the advanced Ottomans. According to some of my countrymen who are better judges than I am of these matters, the custom of veiling women's faces so thickly was adopted by the Ottomans from the Byzantine Greeks, and I think it was man's despotic jealousy in olden days which brought about



the existing practice of covering up and veiling women out of doors, and also their strict seclusion in the houses.

The life in most Turkish harems is very simple, and, if we leave out the case of the few polygamists who still remain, very peaceful and happy. The absolute authority of the husband does not interfere with the recognised privileges of the wife; while the obedience of the wife, which is regarded by more advanced women in Western Europe with such contempt, in most cases strengthens the affection and respect of the husband for her. Wives are not slaves of their husbands, as some people in this country fancy them to be.<sup>1</sup> The inmates of harems live

<sup>1</sup> If the detractors of Islam would take the trouble to find out what is the exact position of women under Mohammedan law, they might feel ashamed of their contention that she is treated like a slave. Laws protecting the rights of women were promulgated under Islam when no such laws existed in Europe. As far back as five hundred years ago women in Turkey had begun to dispute men's superiority openly. As proof of this I will quote a few lines of the poetess Mihri, who lived in the last half of the fifteenth century :—

“Since they cry that woman lacketh wit alway,  
Need must they excuse whatever word she say.  
Better far one female, if she worthy be,  
Than a thousand males, if all unworthy they.”



mostly indoors, but they are not entirely shut up. They go out in groups of two, three, and more to pay visits to other harems, and they receive visitors from the harems of friends and relations. Of course their gatherings are almost always unmixed, but, like the women of other countries, some of them sing and play to entertain others. Dancing has been introduced recently, but it is confined only to very advanced private families. Among the people of the old school the dancing of young ladies in the presence of others is considered shocking. At weddings and other similar festivities only hired professional women amuse the guests by dancing, and these professional dancers are not regarded as respectable. In my time, reading aloud was a favourite pastime in many harems. The number of educated women was much less than it is now. The most learned among them used to read sacred legends, or religious tracts, or recite hymns to the other ladies, who would listen attentively for hours. I believe this social pastime is still in favour in the provinces.

Turkish women, according to their social position, have various duties to discharge. No



qualities are so much sought after in an average marriageable woman as the domestic ones. In the provinces the peasant women, besides managing their humble domestic affairs, have to work in the fields, more especially when their brothers and husbands are away discharging their compulsory military service. The daughters of well-to-do people, besides attending to the business of their households, are indefatigable with their needles, and are always busy with needlework or embroidery ; while the daughters of high dignitaries must, among other duties, learn what their instructors or governesses teach them.

It will be understood from the details I have given that the popular notion prevailing in this country of the harem and the life in the harem is much mistaken. Women in Turkish harems do not really pass their time lying on sofas or couches, eating sweetmeats and smoking water-pipes all day long. Of course they are as fond of sweetstuffs as most ladies of this country. But to lie down on a couch in presence of others is considered by Turkish women vulgarity of the most disgraceful kind.



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The representation of harem life given in books and on the stage, or shown in exhibitions, is either the work of Turkey's detractors, or simply the work of imaginative persons who know nothing about it, and whose object is to attract the curiosity of English people by exhibiting grotesque sights, and thus to make money.

I should, however, agree with any English critic in condemning the custom of seclusion. The hopes which were entertained of checking romantic evils by the custom have hardly been realised ; and on the other hand, the system has done a good deal of harm, because the seclusion of women means that a portion of the national intellect is kept uncultivated. Although many young ladies receive private tuition in the harems, and many of them are highly educated, yet this limited kind of education cannot meet the national requirements of Turkey. In my opinion, the strict seclusion of women is greatly responsible for the backward condition of most Eastern races ; because if mothers are restricted in cultivating their natural intellect, they can give little if any help in the education of their children. The sons of such mothers cannot



keep pace with the people of Europe in the path of progress. There are very many men in Turkey who know all these things, and who long for at least a partial emancipation. However, the emancipation must take place gradually, for if the liberty of men is given to the women of the harems without regard to existing social requirements, they themselves will not wholly appreciate it, while many of them might abuse its privileges ; moreover, many men might take unchivalrous advantage of so new and sudden a social change.

I may be asked why, if the opinion of my country is ripe enough for at least a partial emancipation of women, it is necessary to withhold it now ? The reason can easily be found when one reflects upon the political situation of Turkey. That unhappy country has been suffering for over twenty-six years from a tyranny almost unparalleled in the history of mankind. The Sultan understands perfectly well the influence women might have in educating and enlightening the rising generation. He therefore puts the more restrictions upon the movements of his women subjects.



I cannot say much about the harem quarters of princely palaces. It is well known, however, that the happy family life enjoyed in the harems of private gentlemen cannot be found in the overcrowded harem of a palace. But I can emphasise the fact that the numerous inmates are not all the wives of the lord of the palace. The vastness of domestic arrangements in such an establishment must necessitate the employment of many women as attendants. A sultan or prince, if he resorts to the old rules of polygamy, may marry two, three, and perhaps four wives, but no more, as four is the highest number allowed.

The wives of many well-to-do Ottomans and all the inmates of the royal palaces of Turkey are of Circassian origin. It may be asked why Circassian women find so much favour, and how it is these daughters of the Caucasus adorn the family circle of Turkey? I will give a brief account of them, which may explain these points.

The Circassians, the fine, alert, and powerfully built mountaineers who inhabit the most picturesque regions of the Caucasus, have a world-wide reputation for personal good looks,



and especially for feminine beauty. Those, however, who have had any considerable experience of this famous race might hesitate to say that its women have really a larger share of beauty as a whole than other branches of the human race. What the Circassian women do possess in distinction from those of other races of Eastern Europe and Western Asia is a greater animation of face, to which may be added a figure uniformly handsome and a bolder demeanour. They are for the most part slender; a fat woman is quite uncommon among Circassians of unmixed blood. Their complexions are usually fair; and it is more on account of her fair skin that the Circassian woman is so much admired by the comparatively dark people of Western Asia and Egypt than for her other physical qualities. She is also very readily taught, and adapts herself quickly to her new surroundings; so that, rustic and clumsy in her manners to begin with, she picks up refined and elegant ways in a remarkably short time. I knew of a wealthy and kind lady who once obtained a young Circassian girl from her relations. Though of sympathetic appearance, this girl, whom I saw



at the time, looked an untamed creature in her miserable ragged native dress. When I saw her on another occasion after a few years' interval, I found that the rough diamond had been charmingly polished, and now shone with refined beauty.

The Circassians are mostly Mohammedans. A small number of them have been made to accept the Russian religion, but these converts have always a strong tendency towards the faith of the Arabian Prophet ; and it is only the fear of the wrath of their conquerors that prevents them from denouncing the doctrine of Holy Synod. This tendency is attributable either to the hatred burned into their hearts towards the Muscovite on account of the destruction of their national independence and the loss of their primitive happiness, which has resulted from the sanguinary and fiercely resisted Russian conquest, or to the reason that the precepts of Islam may perhaps suit their native simplicity better.

There is Circassian blood in the veins of almost all the members of the existing dynasties of the Mohammedan Orient. For many generations past the mothers of the Ottoman



Sultans have been Circassians ; just as in the bygone centuries, when the power and influence of Turkey were so great in Eastern Europe, the Sultanas were women mostly belonging to one or other of the Christian States which were tributary to the Ottoman empire. Many of the Mameluke rulers of Egypt were, as well as their wives, Circassians. The female members of the Khedivial harem have always been and are still of Circassian origin, and there are said to be Circassian ladies in the household of the Persian sovereign.

The Nizam of Hyderabad was at one time anxious to marry a Circassian woman. I heard this from a man whose name is widely known throughout India, and who, I believe, has been introduced to English readers in a well known novel under the fictitious name of 'Mr Isaacs.' This gentleman is a native of Diarbekir, in Asiatic Turkey. After living over thirty years in British India, he paid a visit to Constantinople some nine years ago. There, one day, he asked my advice as to how he might procure Circassian slave-girls, saying that he wished to buy one or two to be admitted to the household of His Highness the Nizam.



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This anglicised gentleman imagined, as many Englishmen do, that there is still a public market for slave traffic in Constantinople, and that anyone can go and purchase as many slave-women as he pleases.

It is true that some destitute parents among the refugees from the Caucasus are willing to part with their young girls for a reasonable sum of money, but only on obtaining a sufficient guarantee beforehand that these young girls will be adopted by the buyers (well-to-do families without daughters often adopt orphans and other poor girls), or else that the girls sold in this fashion will be married either by the buyers themselves or by some relation of theirs.

From the moment of the final conquest of their country by Russia up to the present time, thousands of these natives of the Caucasus have immigrated into the Sultan's dominions. A short time ago there appeared a piece of news in the papers, stating that an arrangement had been made between Russian and Ottoman authorities for the settlement in Turkey of about sixty thousand more Circassians who desired to leave the Caucasus



*en masse.* Russia does not object to their emigration nowadays, as she wishes to colonise their land with peasants of the Russian race. On the other hand, the Turkish Government grants them facilities for settling in the thinly inhabited portions of Asia Minor. The Circassians are a healthy and hardy people, and they improve the physical constitution of races with whom they intermingle.

\* \* \* \*

An English reader will naturally want to know how, in a state of affairs in which boys and girls never meet after about their thirteenth year, the matter of marriage is managed ; I will therefore explain the system of matrimony.

As is the case in most parts of the world, in Turkish towns betrothal precedes marriage, but 'courtship' is hardly possible in that country. Young girls and men are not allowed to meet one another, and consequently anything in the way of flirting is out of the question. In some exceptional cases they may, perhaps, be able to get a glimpse of each other from a distance, possibly from the windows of neighbouring houses, and quietly exchange greetings



or make signs of mutual admiration, but this is all they can ever do in the direction of flirtation. Of course, girls may see, though they do not speak with, the men whose wives they may be destined to become some day, but men are strictly prohibited from meeting the marriageable members of the secluded sex. It is scarcely possible for a man to admire and love a woman except on the testimony of others as to her good looks and good qualities. In the same way, the engagements must be made through the medium of the man's lady-relations, or through that of the professional marriage-brokers. The latter are mostly old women, who will endeavour to bring about marriages, not out of good-will to the young couple or for the sake of amusing themselves, but as a matter of business. They visit houses where there are girls suitable for a would-be bridegroom; they make their proposal on his behalf to the family of that young lady of whom they most approve, a proposal which is made in a most roundabout manner, and with great tact. The answer must not come from the prospective bride; that would be considered highly improper. The decision rests with her parents or guardians.



She is, no doubt, consulted, but her voice in the matter is of secondary importance. Probably, too, she does not know her own mind so well as do her sisters in more advanced lands. The matrimonial agent often repeats her visits three or four times that the matter may be well talked over, as the girl's people need to reflect, and also to make a searching inquiry about the man. If the answer be in the negative, it must be made very tactfully and politely. In some parts of Turkey they have a curious way of letting the proposers know that their offer has been declined. Over their ordinary shoes people almost always wear goloshes, and on entering a house they take them off and leave them in the entrance-hall. The servants of the house make a point of arranging the goloshes heel outwards, in such a way that when the visitor goes out he can put his feet straight into them, without having the trouble of turning them round. Now, when the agent of suitor for a lady's hand, on leaving the house, finds that her goloshes are turned with the toes towards her, she knows that the proposal has been declined.

Thus a man gets betrothed to a woman with-



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out being permitted to see his beloved fiancée until the wedding formalities are over and the marriage ceremonies are completed. Astounding tales have been related of what has sometimes happened when a husband has thus seen his wife for the first time. In one town, a man who, from the reports he had heard, was deeply in love with his betrothed, actually left the house and ran away when he drew up the long and beautifully embroidered veil that covered the lady, now his wife, and discovered that she was the ugliest creature his imagination could picture. It is easy to conceive the feelings in such a case of a man who has, on the flattering descriptions of the professional marriage-brokers, been led to believe up to the last moment in the angelic appearance of his wife. How terrible must be his disappointment when, on the day of his marriage, he unveils his dreamt-of 'beauty' and beholds a face rough and painted in the vain endeavour to conceal the ravages of smallpox, or distinguished by an ultra-Israelitish nose and topped with a pretentious wig. The unhappy case of such a disappointed husband must not, however, be overstated. Fortunately for him he does not



often see other female faces, and his notions on the subject of what real beauty is are necessarily restricted by his want of experience. He is naturally of a contented disposition, believes in *kismet* in this as in other things, and so these physical defects do not greatly disturb his peace of mind, and it is only very rarely that he runs away from his wife.

Such matters as courtship and engagements are quite different among the agricultural and tribal people, where the girls and boys work together in the fields, in the gardens and pastures, and thus pass their early years in each other's society; their marriage in later years is generally the outcome of natural affection, first awakened by that companionship. But even in the towns it is sometimes possible for a man to make the acquaintance of a woman before marrying her. This is done by the betrothed pair arranging a secret interview, which, it is said, is usually brought about with the kind assistance of old and trusted servants. Curiously enough, the professional marriage-broker is sometimes reported to be the person who arranges this private interview; but one thing is absolutely certain, namely, that unless



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she is handsomely tipped, it is to her own advantage to stick strictly to the good old custom.

The wedding of a young couple itself, like their betrothal, takes place in an indirect manner. They are married in a house privately, in the presence of persons closely related to them. They do not go to any place of worship. As I pointed out before, the houses in Turkey are divided into two parts, one reserved for the male, the other for the female members of the household, and there is a long passage between the two. On the wedding-day the ladies fill up the passage, having in front of them the bride, while all the gentlemen present go to the room in the men's department which opens on to the passage, the prominent figure among them being the bridegroom. The door between the passage and the room is closed, and the most profound silence must prevail both in the passage and the adjacent room. Among the gentlemen, the father of the bride, or, failing him, any elderly man under whose guardianship or protection she may be, gets up, knocks at the door, and most solemnly and impressively asks this question, "My daughter! we are about



to marry you to Mr. So-and-so, in accordance with the will of Almighty God and the ordinances of the Prophet. Will you marry him?" She gives no answer. The old man repeats the question; still she does not utter a single syllable. He asks again in a wearied manner, and this time the question is followed by a sound of sobbing inside the passage. Whether the reason of this weeping be the pressure put upon the shy and inexperienced girl in that impressive moment, or whether it be the pinches she receives from that termagant, the professional marriage-broker, and from her mischievous girl-friends who urge her to speak out, I cannot tell.

Meanwhile the bridegroom grows impatient; everyone in the audience can notice the signs of anger and anxiety on his face. The old man repeats his question a fourth time, and at last the word of consent is uttered in a very low voice from behind the door. At the same moment the bridegroom shows his feelings of relief by some motions expressive of pleasure, or by looking more than usually gratified. The old gentleman turns to him and formally asks him whether he will marry Miss So-and-so.



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He makes no modest hesitation, as, in his opinion, modesty is quite uncalled for here, is, in fact, an unpleasant outcome of the organised hypocrisy of society. So he answers the old gentleman's question at once, with the unblushing boldness peculiar to his sex. After this all the audience bear witness to the legitimacy of the event. A brief prayer is then recited, after which all offer their congratulations to the bridegroom. They draw up and sign the wedding-contract immediately, that it may be certified by the semi-religious magistrate called the *Kadi*. But the young couple are not permitted to see each other till all the marriage ceremonies are completed, and that is not till several days have passed.

Another curious custom connected with marriage is that of a bridegroom's friends beating him on the back with their fists. This is commonly the case in Turkey. At the very moment when the bridegroom is going to see the face of his wife the first time, after all formalities of the wedding are over, intimate friends and relations collect just outside the door of the female portion of the house. After wishing him a happy life, they belabour him



from behind as he hurries into the ladies quarter, a proceeding which no doubt considerably accelerates his movements. The punishment is supposed to be inflicted in a gentle manner, but it may perhaps be that some of the young bachelors relieve their feeling of jealousy by making the customary blows somewhat harder than absolutely necessary.

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Before closing this chapter on the theme of the secluded sex, I ought to say something of the way in which it does its shopping, and give some description of the women-pedlars who visit the harems to display their wares. There are probably few people in this country, even among those who are interested in the world's trade, who know much about these female traders of the East. Nevertheless, in those vast tracts of the Orient where the female sex passes its life in strict seclusion, a considerable retail business of a primitive kind is transacted by wandering women-pedlars, who carry their goods round and display them in the houses of well-to-do families. Originally this trade was carried on entirely by native women, but of



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late a certain number of European women have embarked in it, either on their own account or as agents of small European houses. At a time when the question of spreading British commercial interests abroad is attracting so much attention, it may not be amiss to inquire into this method of trading, which, more than any other in the world, is the prerogative of women, for they alone can engage in it.

Of course, the business lies almost entirely among the families of Mohammedans, of whom it is estimated that Great Britain has nearly a hundred million among her subjects; it is also probable that the future will see this number largely increased. Moreover, in the territories of other powers, where the populations are largely Mohammedan, this country has vital trade interests. A lesson is to be learned from missionaries in pushing British commerce in the East. A very large proportion of the success in Oriental countries gained by missionaries is due to the ladies who assist them, for naturally they alone can get at the women of the East. What applies to the spread of religion applies also to the spread of trade, and the work done by the Zenana



Missions should be a sufficient indication of what a trading association on the same lines could effect. Equally it should show the British commercial houses which have considerable connections with the East that lady agents to display and sell their goods would be of great assistance to them. There are many Mussulman women who cannot go to markets and shops, and their custom would be practically assured to the firms which sent goods to their houses by lady agents, more especially such goods as are required for household use.

In Turkey, Roman Catholic nuns have already adopted this method of business, and they have numerous customers among Mohammedan women for the woollen stuffs, cloth, stockings, shawls, and such things, which they make in their own convents. The need felt by Mohammedan families for such means of doing their shopping is very great, and is rapidly becoming greater owing to the spread of European influence and refinement, which naturally necessitates an increase of household requirements and personal luxuries. This adoption of Western comfort and modes of life does not seem to affect the seclusion of



Oriental women to the extent that was at one time expected. And in any case in the East women depend on others to a great extent for procuring all the things they require for themselves and their households.

It is true, of course, that husbands, brothers, and sons can be sent to buy these things, just as in England, but also, just as in England, husbands, brothers, and sons cannot always be relied upon either to get the right article, or even to remember to get anything at all. In any case the method has many disadvantages.

With the exception of villagers and the poorest classes, only women of advanced ideas ever go to market or to the shops in the large towns, and even they do not and cannot know the delights of shopping. They are veiled, to begin with ; and being unaccustomed to talk to strangers, they are not at their ease or quite satisfied with the propriety of their proceedings. No ; the woman of the East much prefers to do her shopping in her own house from a woman-pedlar, and there it is rumoured that she feels as much pleasure in it as her sister of the West.

‘The Unchanging East’ is a phrase used



often, and shows the user's ignorance, for the East is changing steadily. Western methods and ideas are gradually being accepted, and with them the everyday needs and requirements which accompany them. Home manufacture is unable to supply these needs, and there is a constant and growing demand for European products. We ourselves have often had to send from France and England to our friends in Turkey, Cyprus and Syria, such things as pocket-knives, scissors, housewives, and work-baskets, articles required for education, such as drawing-boxes, and last, but not least, children's toys. But ~~this~~ was not enough; our friends have generally written to us to get some more of these things for their friends.

No doubt such articles can be obtained in Oriental countries if you know where to look for them, but our friends do not know, and they are not to be found in the stock of the woman-pedlar. Here is an opening for the lady-trader.



## CHAPTER IV.

### I GO TO CONSTANTINOPLE AND PURSUE MY STUDIES.

The discomforts of travelling—Precautions against brigands—Village hospitality—Bad condition of inns and hotels—Broussa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire—Constantinople—The 'parish' of the conqueror—First impressions of the European quarter—The question of my education—Seats of learning, old and new—I am forced to choose the old—I become a sort of monk—The distinctive dress—Description of the old-fashioned colleges—The *Ulema*—Their position and influence.

My residence in my uncle's home in Asia Minor did not last very long after my removal from his harem, as he decided to go to Constantinople to live there again. Of course I was to go with his family, so that I might continue my education. Everyone in my uncle's house began to pack, and my mother prepared new clothes and all kinds of eatables for me for the



journey, which would take seven days. My uncle did not permit me to go to my mother's house and spend my few remaining days with her. I only went to see her during the day-time, when I found her always in deep distress at the thought of our approaching separation. She had only one son remaining, a child of two years, my elder brother having been sent to the same place to which I was going for the same purpose two years previously. In those days there was no railway line between my native town and the Asiatic coast of the Sea of Marmora, so our journey had to be made in a kind of a four-wheeled travelling carriage, which was introduced into Turkey by the emigrant Crimean Tartars, and which much resembles the big vans employed for carrying parcels in London. Travelling in these coaches is an extremely uncomfortable proceeding. To guard against the jolting caused by the lack of adequate springs the floor of the vehicle is covered with mattresses, but even then the shaking is quite insufferable. In those days it was made worse by the primitive condition of the roads, which indeed are little better now. Some fifteen years ago the Government pro-



mulgated a law ordering every able-bodied male throughout the country to work four days a year at making public roads between towns, or to pay a workman's wage for four days in default. Some well-meaning governors did their best to improve the roads, but officials nominated by the palace, who form the majority of officialdom, abused this law and pocketed the funds raised, and so a great part of the public roads were ultimately left unfinished, and no care was taken to keep in repair even the portions that were completed. Good roads, like other means of easy travelling, would facilitate the incursion of visitors and tourists into the interior of Asiatic Turkey, and nothing would be more repugnant to the Sultan than to see this; and again, nothing would be more undesirable for the Sultan and his *entourage* than to see parties of Englishmen and Americans wondering at the unopened, undeveloped spots of the country, coming directly into contact with his subjects, and contrasting their poverty-stricken and wretched condition with the natural beauty and richness of the land in which they live.

The appointed day at last arrived, and we



started for Constantinople in the jolting van-like coaches, of which we hired twelve, seven being assigned to the ladies and their luggage, and five to the men. As is necessary for travellers of position who may carry valuables with them, we had three gendarmes put at our disposal by the local authorities. This was a precaution against brigands, who are to be met with every now and then in the thinly inhabited and mountainous regions of Asiatic Turkey. It hardly ever happens, however, that these brigands are Turks. Ever since the days of the Crusaders the ill-informed section of the European public has manifested a prejudice against the Turks, and as one result of this prejudice therefore, when reports are heard in Europe of cases of brigandage occurring in Turkey, it is unhesitatingly concluded that the brigands must be Turks. As a matter of fact, the provincial Turk is generally an honest fellow. It was not the Turkish villagers that we feared; nor did we fear the Kurds, who mostly infest the Eastern portion of Asia Minor; or the Greeks, of whom the provinces through which we had to pass were fairly clear. Our precautions were directed against any possible



attack from the emigrant settlers, the majority of whom are Circassians.

According to our day's itinerary, we had to pass the first night in a small town which we expected to reach after thirteen hours' travelling. But before we had got half-way our drivers said that they did not want to over-fatigue their horses, and as the ladies expressed a wish not to journey after nightfall, we stopped at a small village. We found it difficult to get a sufficient number of rooms there, and we were too numerous to be the guests of any of the village dignitaries, who, though invariably hospitable, were not sufficiently well-off to maintain so large a party.

Hospitality is an inborn instinct in most of the Turkish villagers. They love entertaining passing strangers, and they expect nothing in return for the trouble they take on their visitors' behalf. This fact has often been mentioned by Europeans who have travelled in Asia Minor. But the inhabitants of the village where we passed our first night did not show us much sympathy. People in these parts, however, have good reason for not being very hospitable. All officials who are appointed to this province



by the Sultan—and they have usually large families—claim hospitality for themselves and for their families as they travel to and fro from Constantinople, and they imagine that by so doing they force the “loyal slave-subjects” of the Sultan to perform their duty. Although my uncle was an official, he would not have dreamt of imposing any obligation upon poor villagers, for he was himself a native of Asia Minor, and naturally did not wish to inconvenience his compatriots. We induced, however, some of the villagers to spare a few rooms in their mud huts. I and three other men had to sleep in a dimly-lighted loft above a stable in which were several bullocks, calves, and donkeys. I think some English travellers have had the same experience before now in Asia Minor, and they generally complain of the unpleasantness of these lofts, and of the noise and effluvia from the animals. I did not object to these things much, as I was used to farm life; moreover, I have heard and almost believe that sleeping in stables is good for the health. Tired to death by journeying in a shaky van, I was ready to fall asleep at once, but hundreds of fleas, coming perhaps from the dusty floor of the loft or



falling from the thatch above, made an assault on me, and rendered sleep impossible. I wanted to go out to our van, taking a carpet with me to lie on, but when I got out I saw three huge shepherd's dogs lying near the vans, so I did not dare to leave the stable door.

These fierce dogs are especially trained to be savage in order to guard the sheep and mohair goats against thieves and wolves. They would tear to pieces any stranger who might walk through the village at night. They are powerfully built animals, mostly light-yellow and grey in colour, with long silky coats. Mohair goat breeders always fasten round the neck of these dogs chain collars studded with sharp nails, because when wolves attack them they invariably try to seize the dogs by the neck or throat, and the studded collars act as preventive armour against the teeth of the assailant.

After passing the night in that most uncomfortable village, we started for the next town. We followed the travellers' custom in quartering at the house of one of the notables, and enjoying the national hospitality I have mentioned. In towns this sort of hospitality to travellers can only be given when host and



guest are personally acquainted, or when the latter can produce letters of introduction from some friends of the host.

On the third night of our journey we had arranged to stay in a Turcoman village, but we found that the people of the village had shut up their huts, and had removed, with all their belongings, to some high pasture land in the vicinity, where there were several lovely springs. We went to this spot and spent the night there under three tents, which were woven from the hair of black goats, and which were lent to us by these quasi-nomadic people for the night. In return for this we tendered them money, but they were affronted by this offer, so we gave them 'some presents from town.'

We spent the fourth night in a large inn, for there was nothing there worthy of the name of hotel. As a matter of fact, except in a few big towns on the coasts and on the existing railway lines, there are no hotels where it is possible to be tolerably comfortable. The average houses calling themselves hotels, of which many are being built in the crowded centres, and conducted by native Christians, are in reality



nothing more than taverns, where the appearance of drunkards is a continual shock to the feelings of sober Ottoman families who may need to put up at these places when travelling. If they cannot secure a letter of introduction to some dignitary of a town for the night, they would rather go to an old-fashioned *khan*, or inn, than to one of these modern taverns. Rooms in these inns are unfurnished, and usually filthy beyond description. All kinds of vermin may be expected, and even the visit of an occasional scorpion.

After passing two more nights on our journey, on the sixth evening we reached the town of Broussa, which is situated at the foot of the Asiatic Olympus. We stopped in Broussa several days, as the town is full of pretty mosques, shrines, and mausoleums, and large baths built over thermal springs, which are well worth seeing. Broussa is one of the largest towns in the Turkish empire. It served as capital for the first three Ottoman Sultans. It is said that when the Sultan Mohammed II. conquered Constantinople he brought nearly 50,000 Turkish families from Broussa to settle in the new capital. From Broussa we went



down to the shore of Marmora, and there took boat for Constantinople.

The part of Stamboul in which my uncle took up his residence was in the neighbourhood of the great mosque of Mohammed II., the conqueror of Constantinople. This is the centre of the locality which is exclusively inhabited by Turkish families of the old-fashioned type. My cousins and I were given two weeks' holiday by my uncle in which to explore the city and see the sights. One day we were allowed to go over the Golden Horn to visit Pera, the European quarter of the capital, where we were amazed at the evident signs of the prosperity and richness of its population. While we were enviously imagining how happy these people must be, an old man, who was guiding our little party, warned us that to set our ambitions on such worldly progress was not in accordance with the ideals of contentment of the faithful, and reminded us that "This world is the heaven of infidels." This saying, which is wrongly attributed to the Prophet, is one of the principles of that fatalism, the firm belief which is one of the chief reasons for the stationary condition and want of progress which



distinguish the majority of Orientals. On coming back from Pera, however, we received quite a different impression, for we witnessed the seamy side of European life. The larger portion of the European quarter is inhabited by Greeks, Poles, Levantines, Italians and Maltese. Here may be seen dirty cut-throats with crime written large on their faces, and, above all, many an habitual drunkard, whose face tells the tale of his debauched life. Here, too, we saw disreputable houses, with half-naked and painted creatures sitting on their balconies or standing on the thresholds of their doors, and calling out invitations to all who passed by. Here we saw countless drink and dram shops, all filled with ~~ruffian~~ sailors, Greek thieves, quarrelsome Maltese, and the dregs of European society. They were all more or less drunk, most of them openly armed with daggers and revolvers. None of these ruffians would dream of obeying the law of the country and its police, for each of them enjoys his capitulation privileges, and thus is under the protection of the Embassy and Consulate of his country, whatever it may be. We were disgusted with such an exhibition of what most



Moslems believe to be "Christian life." It is unfortunately a fact that all the bad points of European civilisation spread with ease and rapidity, while its good and useful points seem seldom to have any effect on life in Oriental countries. *Quile So.*

After this excursion I was not permitted to revisit the European quarter of the capital for a considerable time. I had to resume the course of my education.

In what way my cousins and I should be educated in Constantinople was a question which had to be considered by my uncle. There are two kinds of higher education in Turkey. One of them is to receive instruction in the old-fashioned colleges or *madrasseh*, of which I have made mention before, and of which I will in this chapter give some further description. The other form of education is that now carried on in the modern schools and colleges. Of these there are many in Constantinople. They are modelled on the system of the educational institutions of some of the European countries. In these places of learning, unlike the old-fashioned *madrasseh*, all kinds of what I may call utilitarian subjects,



necessitated by modern requirements, are taught. In addition to the great military academy and preparatory military colleges, naval college, civil and military medical institutions, and the Imperial lycée, some of which are fifty or sixty years old, there are civil servants', law, civil-engineering, and several minor colleges of recent foundation. Two years ago an official project was in the air for creating a regular University in Constantinople. But the present Sultan is not likely to favour in earnest such a scheme, which would necessarily result in the increased popularity of European culture. Formerly those colleges of modern creation turned out men of marked ability in all branches of literature and science which existed in the country. But, unhappily, Abd-ul-Hamid's inflexible determination to suppress at any cost what are called 'young-Turkish ideas,' or liberalism, has seriously interfered with and paralysed the progress of these seminaries of culture and education.

My desire was to join one of these colleges, after having been prepared by private tuition to pass the obligatory entrance examination. But



since my elder brother had already entered one of the modern colleges, my uncle urged me to affiliate myself to one of the old-fashioned *madrassehs*. As we had yet some hope of recovering our confiscated property, and as the right of holding the estates depended on the heir's following our grandfather's semi-theological profession, my uncle insisted that I should continue my studies in one of these quasi-theological *madrassehs*. Although I was most reluctant, I had to fall in with his wishes, so I prepared to go and live with a tutor who had his room in the *madrasseh* which is attached to the mosque of little St. Sophia,<sup>1</sup> a Byzantine building, which is as much visited by European tourists as the great St. Sophia. When one becomes a member of these old-fashioned institutions of learning, one must wear a professional turban and a long cloak, let the beard grow, if one is old enough to have one, and shave the hair off one's head. They procured for me a turban and cloak, and my uncle sent me with a manservant to a barber's shop to get my head shaved. The shaving of a thick head of hair is a most painful thing, and

<sup>1</sup> The ancient Church of Sergius and Bacchus.



tears filled my eyes, partly from the pain caused by the razor on my unaccustomed head, and partly, I think, from the anticipation of the terrible monk-like existence I was about to pass in the *madrasseh*. Next day I went with my luggage to the school, but did not begin my studies until several months had passed away, as I caught cold by being shaved, and suffered in consequence from headache and ophthalmia. I shall never forget the miserable life I passed in that school. It will perhaps be of some interest if I give a description of a *madrasseh*, and the mode of life and study therein.

There are in Constantinople over a hundred of these theological colleges, or *madrassehs*. In the provinces each important town is provided with several. These seminaries of old Moslem culture are not peculiar to Turkey—they exist also in Egypt, Persia, and some other Oriental countries, and at one time they were the only places of instruction. They served not only as schools for religious teaching when they were originally founded in past days, but all branches of human knowledge known in the East were to be taught in them. In Constantinople some of them still retain their



original names—‘*Madrasseh* of Medicine,’ ‘*Madrasseh* of History,’ and so on. The Moslem people were formerly divided into two distinct classes—the great illiterate mass, and the learned hierarchy known as *Ulema*. Although all instruction given in the *madrasseh* was formed on the basis of the faith of Islam, the *Ulema* were certainly not entirely theologians. They were certainly not priests, as Islam recognises no spiritual authority. Mohammed has stated distinctly that “there is no priesthood in Islam.” With the lapse of time human knowledge advanced, and the high culture which existed among Moslems in mediæval times decayed; but still the *Ulema* continued to teach the Arabic language, with its literature and law, secular and spiritual. Ultimately countries like Turkey and Egypt felt the necessity of learning something from the progressive nations of Europe, and, in imitation of their educational institutions, began to establish schools and colleges for modern learning and science. In the Ottoman empire the *Ulema*, having nearly lost their occupations as professors and judges, now hold a peculiar position, which somewhat resembles a sort of



priesthood. Of course, this class still retains its old professional titles, receives pensions, and lives on the revenues accruing from charitable endowments. Moreover, its members still have a greater influence over the ignorant masses than persons of modern education, but they are not now of much service to the State. The *madrassehs* are, notwithstanding, still full of students who wish to become members of that body, but the more intelligent of them, instead of attending the old course of lectures in the mosques, go to some modern college in order to qualify themselves for professions which will be of practical use to them. Many of them spend their time in the *madrassehs* idly, or simply live in them till they have passed an examination by which they are exempted from military service, and then return to their towns and villages. Again, some of these students who are really working, instead of attending one of the modern colleges, go to an institution founded for the training of the *Kadis* or semi-religious magistrates. These students are all called *Softas*. All the affairs of the *madrassehs* are under the control of the office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, which, though it still forms a distinct



ministry, and though the Sheikh-ul-Islam is still a member of the Cabinet of the Porte, has lost many of the important official functions it once had. The position of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, the head of the *Ulema*, at present resembles that of the ecclesiastical head of a Christian country, though, as I stated before, no ecclesiastics could be recognised as such in Islam. The number of the students in the *madrassehs* of Constantinople is estimated to be something between five and seven thousand.

Originally the *madrassehs* were founded on a system much resembling that of the colleges of the English Universities. They were built by the munificence of the Sultans and of private persons, and most of them were situated near mosques, to which they were attached, and were supported from the same endowments as the mosques themselves, for the charitable founders of these endowments aimed particularly at increasing the congregations that attend public worship, and devised that the students should also use the mosques as their lecture-halls. Even nowadays most lectures are given in the mosques. Each *madrasseh* was self-governing, and the principals, or, so to say, the 'fellows,'



used to look after its interests and decide its rules. All the students used to be regularly supplied with soup, bread, and, on certain days, with cooked rice, and a kind of sweet made of saffron, and also with olive oil for their lamps, from a sort of kitchen endowed for the purpose. Free 'commons' of this sort for students are supplied only occasionally and sparsely nowadays, as the revenues of the endowed estates and properties have long been put under the care and control of officialdom, and the income from charities is now abused and illegally appropriated by the corrupt and impious hands through which it passes. In consequence, members of the *madrassehs* now can often not even raise funds to save their buildings from complete ruin. These buildings are mostly square in shape, with a courtyard in the middle, and have one and sometimes two stories. They are unhealthy, and cannot be properly ventilated. The students take their baths behind the doors of their rooms, cook their meals in the fireplace, and, as a rule, two or three sleep in one room, on the floor. The damp, foetid smell in most of the rooms is terrible. My hard fate made



me live five years in such a place, and they were the years which ought to be the best of one's youth.

The life of the students of these *madrassehs* resembles that of monks in monasteries of the Eastern Church. They prepare their own modest food, clean their own rooms, make their own beds, and wash their own clothes. A new student not only does all this for himself, but he has also to do it for the fellow or tutor of the *madrasseh* in whose room he is placed. Most of the students are very poor. They go every year during the *ramadan*—the month of fasting—to different provincial towns and villages to preach, to teach, and to do some writing for the illiterate villagers and provincials, and, after securing what fees, alms, and provisions they can get, they return to their respective *madrassehs* to resume their work.

The *Softas* played a conspicuous part in some of the revolutions, for if once they were roused and egged on by politicians, they would assemble in the courtyards of the great mosques, bearing yataghans and heavy clubs under their long cloaks, and numberless common people would follow them. The viziers who



deposed the late Sultan Aziz had to get the support of the *Softas*. Midhat Pasha had to secure their assistance when he was urging the present Sultan to sanction the scheme for the new constitution. A certain Suavi Effendi, one of the founders of the young-Turkish movement, who had himself been a *Softa*, twenty-five years ago made an armed attack on the Sultan's palace ; with him fought and fell many of the *Softas*. The Sultan, whose marvellous power and success in crushing everything which might endanger his despotic personal rule is undeniable, has paralysed the collective influence of the *Softas*, so that they can no longer be the political tools of any power that may arise to oppose him.

During my residence in the *madrasseh* my uncle used to give me as pocket-money twenty piastres (about 3s. 5d.) a month, and to the tutor of the *madrasseh*, in whose room I was a novice-disciple, eighty piastres, to cover the expenses of my maintenance. This was quite enough for a man who has to live as abstemiously and simply as a monk. Moreover, provisions in Constantinople are very cheap, a fact which is not known to European visitors,



who are invariably cheated by the Levantine and Greek hotel-keepers and tradesmen. Secretly, however, I received further support from my affectionate mother, through an Armenian merchant who came from Angora.



## CHAPTER V.

### A NEW PROFESSION AND THE QUESTION OF CONSCRIPTION.

First moderation of my prejudice against Europeans—The  
Levantine guide—The truth is not in him—I begin to  
wish to visit England—A summer trip to Asia Minor—  
A British consul—His wife and my mother—A trip in  
the Eastern Mediterranean—Thoughts of a more profit-  
able career—I join a law college—The law of Turkey  
—Untrustworthiness of English books of reference—  
Turkish law courts—A quasi-religious magistracy—  
Palace influence over justice—I am called to serve in  
the army—I obtain exemption with much difficulty—  
Methods of conscription—Native Christians not allowed  
to serve—The wisdom of this policy.

AFTER living the hard life of the *madrasseh* for  
three solitary years, I was permitted by my  
uncle to pay a visit to my native town during  
a vacation. It was at this time that my pre-  
judice against the unbelievers of Europe first  
began to be moderated, and it came about in



this way. During a summer afternoon, as I was walking in the garden of the *madrasseh*, a young European, accompanied by a pretty girl, was just coming out of the mosque of little St. Sophia. They excited my curiosity, as the appearance of all Europeans who came to visit those ancient edifices always excites the curiosity of the people living near them. They both looked at a mulberry tree loaded with fruit, and the gentleman picked up a berry which had just fallen and gave it to the lady. I walked towards them, with what possibly was a rather forbidding air. They started, and appeared somewhat embarrassed. I signed to them to stop, and, taking off my shoes, climbed up the tree and picked a handful of the ripe fruit. I put the fruit on two large leaves of the tree and offered it to the lady. My action seemed to please them. They had no guide, which pleased me greatly, for there are no more shameless cheats than those ignorant interpreters, who are as a class one of the worst products of the non-Mussulman natives of the Levant. Many Europeans who pay a flying visit to the Levant, and hasten to sit down and write a book about their experiences, derive



all their information from these cicerones and interpreters. Probably it is on account of this that a countryman of mine once remarked, "When we read such books, especially those written in English, about ourselves, we always learn something from them which we never knew or heard of before." As the English were respected above all other European nations in those days in the Ottoman empire, and as everyone used to think every European visitor must be English, I took the couple for English people. Whether they were really British or not is an open question. We exchanged a parting greeting, but to my regret I did not speak any language then except my own, in which I might try to talk to them. From that moment, however, my mind was possessed by a desire to see England, though I could not mention it to anyone, because the people of the *madrasseh* would have been greatly shocked by such a suggestion, and would perhaps have brought a charge against me of wishing to turn myself into a Christian.

I started soon after this for home. The party with which I travelled took a route different from the one by which we had come



three years previously to Constantinople. I therefore had the opportunity of visiting other towns of Asia Minor. When I reached our own town, I found that my mother had already moved to her summer house in the country. By a strange coincidence, the British Consul and his family were staying in a summer residence which they had hired close by our own. They were the only English people, and also the only Europeans, to be found in the town, as the Anatolian railway was not then even projected, and no European could possibly have found any employment there. I made the acquaintance of the Consul one day while shooting wild-duck on the shores of a neighbouring lake. The British Consul was able to make himself understood in Turkish, and we soon struck up an acquaintance. I made him promise to meet me again, so that we might go shooting together. When I became more intimate with him, I was privileged by an introduction to his wife, who did not associate at all with the ladies of the country. A wish crossed my mind soon after that my mother and she should meet. This was a most delicate matter, because, though I



found the lady very charming, after all, from my mother's point of view, she was an 'infidel.' However, I secured her consent, and she met the English lady with a considerable amount of shyness. On account of the Englishwoman's inability to speak Turkish sufficiently, they talked very little. Notwithstanding this, my mother liked her visitor greatly, and she afterwards repeatedly expressed to me her regret that such a nice woman should not be a follower of 'the true religion of God,' that is to say, Islam. I used to ask many questions of the Consul about his country, and I think my inquiries must have been of the most ridiculous description, for while they answered me most kindly, wife and husband exchanged words in their own tongue and smiled the whole time. I was so afraid of the prejudices of my people that I did not even venture to express to the Consul my then most unrealisable desire of visiting England.

When the three months' vacation given to me that year came to an end, I started for Constantinople again. Having gained sufficient seniority in the *madrasseh* I was now free from serving any tutor. I had a room



which I shared with an Albanian fellow-pupil. That year I made progress in the study of Mohammedan law, which is always taught in the Arabic language. Two more years passed. The next summer vacation I wanted to see some new country, so I took a French liner for Beyrout, where I had a relation. On my way I stayed at Smyrna, and visited the Turkish islands of Chios and Mitylene. During my travels I saw many young men who, having completed their studies in modern colleges, had been appointed by the Government to various posts in the provinces, with salaries which at that time seemed to me higher than could have been expected by any young man. An idea crossed my mind that I might change the course of the antiquated studies on which I was wasting my time. On making inquiries about a rational system of education to which I could devote myself, and by which I might eventually make a future career and earn a competence, I found that an entrance examination was going to take place in three months for the newly established law college. The Government wished to find trained officials for the new courts, and qualified advocates for



the bar. I determined to try my luck ; and a young officer from the military academy, who was residing close to our *madrasseh*, gave me, as a favour, some coaching for the examination in geography and arithmetic, the two subjects in which I was most backward. I passed the examination fairly well, and joined the law institution.

As I said before, all the progress of the educational institutions of modern creation has of late been lamentably hampered by the interference of the Sultan's palace Government, whose principal desire is to crush the growing liberalism. I should, however, mention here, to the credit of the Porte, that these institutions were originally founded, and have always been maintained, at the expense of the State, and that they are mostly free and open to students of all classes of people, without distinction of race or faith. In our first year's class at the law college, in which there were about forty-five students, the number of Armenians alone reached thirteen.

By giving some account of the subjects taught us in the law college of Constantinople, I shall be able to state in brief the nature of



the statutes and constitution of the Ottoman empire and its judiciary institutions.

Besides a few subjects which are of general interest to all trained lawyers and legal officers, there are various courses of lectures on the civil code and its procedure, criminal law and its procedure, land law, commercial and mercantile law, digest of administrative regulations, chapters on international law and capitulation treaties, and so forth. The civil code is based upon the rules established in succeeding centuries from the time of the Ommiade and Abbaside Caliphates down to the early days of the Ottomans, as set down by various Arabic books, which were compiled by the early Moslem jurists, who have made many commentaries on them. The civil code of Turkey, therefore, is based entirely upon the ordinances of the Mussulman secular law. It was framed by a board of men well versed in the literature and the jurisprudence of the Moslem East. This board was formed during the reign of the late Sultan, and it took nearly fifteen years to carry out the necessary researches and frame the code as it now exists. It is noteworthy that, as has been shown by competent author-



ities, there are many essential points of resemblance between this code and the civil laws of some European nations which have borrowed their materials from the sources of Roman law.

The procedure of the Turkish civil code is based partly on the French system and partly on the usages which existed in the ancient courts of Turkey. The land law is also based on the principles of the Mussulman secular law relating to land and estates, and on the established precedents existing in the empire. This law is of much interest to Europeans residing in Turkey, because while, so far as the criminal and civil cases are concerned, those Europeans enjoy the protection of their capitulation privileges, with regard to the land law they are subject to the complete jurisdiction of the Ottoman Government. The reason of this is that when the representatives of the Great Powers demanded that the Porte should grant to their subjects the right of acquiring property in the Ottoman dominions, the Porte insisted that, as a counter-concession, the Powers should renounce the capitulation privileges, and thus leave their subjects under the jurisdiction of Turkey, so far as the acquisition of land and



cases arising from it were concerned. The criminal law and its procedure, the procedure concerning the formation of courts, and commercial law are almost entirely copied from the French judicial system, while the mercantile law is copied partly from France and partly from Holland. Most regulations of various kinds promulgated since the Treaty of Paris have been adopted from the State regulations of some of the Continental Powers, more especially of France. In many cases they have been adopted without much regard to the local requirements of the Levant. The pressure put upon the Porte by the Great Powers at different periods for the introduction of reforms is responsible for the hasty adoption of the least suitable of these legal and administrative laws.

The details I have given above will give some idea of the existing statutes and constitution of the Ottoman Empire. When you open your best books of reference to see what are the laws of Turkey, you will find in one this useful piece of information :—"The Koran is the legal and theological code upon which the fundamental laws of the Empire are based,"



while in another you will see the following illuminating passage:—" . . . Fundamental laws of the Empire are based upon the precepts of the Koran. The next to Koran the laws of Multeka" (!) I have no doubt this last bit of knowledge is borrowed from the meaningless writings of Canon McColl on Turkish matters. I have often pointed out to Englishmen of my acquaintance many of the mistaken notions prevailing in this country on the affairs of the nearer East. The answers and reasons given to me were always the same—namely, that Englishmen are not much interested in Turkish matters nowadays. This indifference on the part of Englishmen is the chief reason why the prestige of Great Britain is doomed to disappear in the Levant. If the editors or writers of such productions as those I have quoted are also of the opinion that Englishmen do not now take an interest in the Turkish empire, I should think that, instead of filling up their pages with ridiculous inaccuracies, they would be better advised not to write anything on Turkey at all.

As regards the law courts of Turkey, they can be divided into two main classes—the old



courts and the reformed courts. The old courts form part of the office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, and they have a half-religious complexion. Their functions are nowadays reduced to a few matters, such as the settling of inheritance, deciding on divorce actions, certifying marriages, and looking after such other cases as may arise among the members of a Mohammedan community. Questions of this nature among the native Christian communities are taken charge of by the Patriarchate of each community.

With the exception of the courts which are charged with the trial of all civil officials who may be accused of offences connected solely with their administrative duties, and which are attached to the Council of State Presidency, all the reformed courts form part of the Ministry of Justice. Like all the departmental bureaus of that Ministry, the central courts are situated in the huge buildings opposite St. Sophia, and just outside the gate of the ancient seraglio. Both criminal and ordinary civil courts are divided into three degrees—namely, preliminary, appeal, and *cassation* courts. Here there are also two commercial courts, one dealing with cases



connected with the mercantile marine, the other with actions arising out of all commercial and trading matters. A section of the latter court has a mixed or international character ; that is to say, among its members there are foreigners, not appointed by the Ottoman Government, but deputed by foreigners. This section deals with the commercial disputes between Ottoman and foreign subjects.

The old semi-ecclesiastical courts, from the time when they had to deal with every kind of lawsuit until now, have been conducted on what I may call a 'one-judge system,' that is to say, each court, like the English law courts, has a single judge to deal with the cases brought before it. But each of the new or reformed courts has, besides the chief judge, several deputy judges ; in other words, a president and members. This imitation of the legal arrangements of France has not proved the check on the perversions of justice charged against the old simple method which was expected. Experience has shown that as the population of Turkey is so widely heterogeneous, to have several judges in a court, who may belong to different nationalities and religions,



gives rise to even more corruption and partiality than when there is one only.

The evils of the present Hamidian tyranny have destroyed all the confidence of the people in the new courts. Legal officers of capability and integrity are either exiled or appointed to courts in obscure corners of the empire, and the central courts are filled with the favourites of the Palace clique, and these creatures deal out 'justice' according to the will of the Palace. The Sultan has given them orders recently to condemn all opponents of his misrule. Lately about a hundred innocent men have been condemned to death or penal servitude, and their properties have been confiscated by the central criminal courts on the charge of 'high treason.'

\* \* \* \*

Just about the time when I was preparing for my final examination, the director of my college informed me that he had received a communication from the War Office to the effect that I was among the list of men for the year's conscription. This was a very disturbing piece



of news to me, as I had just decided to adopt a new profession, and had left my *madrassseh*. The students in *madrassehs*, who have passed an examination in Arabic and other subjects taught them in that language, are exempted from serving in the army. Although our college was one of the educational institutions of the State, the students of which are also exempted under certain conditions from military service, this exemption had only been recently granted, and the military authorities did not know much about it. Those who knew of it did not view it with favour, as they are very anxious to force rigid conscription upon everyone. They will not argue on this point, and will dispose of all arguments with military brusqueness. It took several months to get the military authorities at the Constantinople War Office and the officers of the division at my birthplace in Anatolia to exempt me from serving in the army, and my dispute with them interfered very seriously with my last and most difficult examination in the college, and as a result I had to content myself with a second - class diploma only. It was not because I was afraid of a soldier's life that I



wanted to escape it ; cowardice is not one of an Osmanli's failings. Indeed, when I first came to Constantinople my wish had been to go to a military school to be trained as an officer, but my uncle ignored it and sent me to the theological *madrasseh*. Now, after several years, to be sent compulsorily into the army as a private would have ruined all my chances in the new career I had mapped out for myself, and there is but little chance of promotion from the ranks.

The methods of conscription in Turkey differ from those of other military countries. Although military service is obligatory in the Turkish empire, conscription is not universal ; that is to say, the privileged natives of Constantinople, the inhabitants of all frontier districts, such as the Albanians and Kurdish clans and Arab tribes, are not forced to serve in the army. Moreover, the Armenians, Greeks, and non-Mussulman natives of the country are completely exempted from military service, and instead of serving as soldiers, each male member of these peoples pays a yearly exemption tax, the amount of which, if I am not mistaken, is about five or six shillings.



Many of these native Christians exercise an incredible amount of ingenuity to get out of paying the tax, and they all grumble incessantly at its tremendous heaviness. They always complain to their European sympathisers about this, and as a matter of fact some kind British politicians take this grievance of the 'oppressed Christian' in hand every now and then, and style it one of the numerous injustices committed against them by the Turks, and defend their cause vigorously in the press or on the platform, in the name of humanity and Christianity. Sometimes you will hear the native Christians of Turkey complain that they are not equally treated, because they are not admitted into the army. But it is easy to see that this half-hearted complaint is merely made for the sake of grumbling, as they are only too thankful for their exemption, knowing what hardships, misery, and material losses are caused by being away for years from home on active service, and they are not unaware that a community liable to stringent conscription is likely to have its numbers thinned. I am not one of those so-called enlightened people styled 'advanced' Turks, who advocate the admission



of these Eastern Christians into the Turkish army. I may be called a fanatic; but so far as the interests of my nation are concerned, I do not mind being so called. What would become of the loyalty, supreme obedience to command, self-sacrificing devotion, and undaunted fighting capacity which distinguish our army, if the Eastern Christians were admitted into it?<sup>1</sup> The Turkish army has always inspired fear in the ambitious and aspiring enemies of our territories, and if it were not for the Turkish army the remainder of the empire would have been divided up long ago. It has beaten a nation which had eighty thousand trained men in the field, and which

<sup>1</sup> In his book *Civilisation des Arabes* (p. 642), Dr Gustave le Bon, the eminent French savant, says: "Le paysan et l'ouvrier Turcs sont sobres, infatigables au travail, fort dévoués à leur famille . . . Soldat, le Turc meurt à son poste sans reculer jamais. De solde, cependant, il n'en touche pas . . . Ce que je viens de dire s'applique uniquement d'ailleurs aux Turcs proprement dits et non assurément à toutes les populations des provinces Asiatiques administrées par la Turquie. On y rencontre le plus souvent surtout dans les villes un mélange de races diverses, résidu abâtardi de tous les envahisseurs qui depuis tant de siècles ont traversé ces contrées. Dans ce mélange inférieur certaines qualités subsistent encore, mais le niveau de la moralité et de courage est descendu fort bas."



received moral and material support from all parts of Europe, in a month. It has made, by its heroic action in the field, an astonished German veteran jump up and exclaim enthusiastically—"What a brilliant army!" and a well known English war correspondent say—"If Alexander came out of his grave he would conquer the world with the Turkish army." This army performed so brilliant a feat as the defence of Plevna; fought, without allies, the greatest conquering nation of our time for nearly a year; and if it were not for the most calamitous mismanagement of the present Sultan, it could probably have pushed back the Russian invaders across the Danube twenty-five years ago. The apprehension of what would happen if Greeks, Armenians, and non-Moslem Syrians were admitted into the army is also justified by the fact that they could not be trusted in the event of a great struggle with, say, Russia. Of course, the Russian army has in it a large number of Mussulman soldiers, and these men fought desperately against us during the last Russo-Turkish War. But while Russia would punish severely any treason committed by them, Turkey could not punish these Eastern Chris-



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*ians for the same offence. Europe would call that punishment persecution, and at once interfere on their behalf. We know the true feelings of these people well, and whatever concession is granted them, it is impossible to inspire in them any feeling of patriotism for the Ottoman empire in general. Those who advocate their inclusion in the army, moreover, say that it would increase the numerical strength of our fighting forces. But the Ottoman army would exceed a million men nowadays in the case of necessity, and for purposes of defence this would be fully a match for any enemy. Another plea for the admission of Christian subjects of Turkey into the army is that, as they are free from conscription, their men stay at home, work without hindrance, and look after the prosperity and welfare of their families uninterruptedly, and their number is on the increase as a consequence. It is quite true that compulsory military service is telling upon the Turkish nation alarmingly. A man is liable to fight from his twentieth year to his fortieth whenever he may be called upon to do so, and he is, of course, always liable to be killed. When he is called to arms, his business is paralysed and*



his poor family left without assistance. But these difficulties can be remedied if the general maladministration is improved, and I hope it will be improved as soon as the present régime is changed.



## CHAPTER VI.

### TURKEY'S INTERNAL DANGERS.

The anomalous position of foreigners in Turkey—Capitulation privileges—The Porte has no jurisdiction over foreign criminals—Attempts to modify the anomaly—Reason for their failure to be found in the Sultan's misrule—The independence of Turkey a mere fiction—The native Christians—Their separatist aspirations—Their treasonable acts—Their English apologists—Tolerant policy of the Turks—Dangers of this tolerance—The Armenians—Their ancient privileges—The massacres—Their present position.

IN the preceding chapter I gave a summarised account of the jurisdiction of Turkey, and also made an allusion to the admission of the Armenians and other non-Mussulman natives of Turkey to the judicial institutions. Here I will say something on the position held by foreign subjects in regard to the law of the country, as well as on the disposition of the



non-Mussulman population towards the Ottoman empire.

As a matter of fact, foreigners enjoy a most extraordinarily privileged position in Turkey, and their privileges are known as 'capitulations.'

Every foreign colony forms a distinct *imperium in imperio* more markedly in Constantinople than in any other city of the Ottoman empire. Every individual foreigner enjoys extra-territorial privileges, such as in other countries could only be afforded to the diplomatic representatives of Foreign Powers. Whatever crime a foreign subject may commit, he is not amenable to the authority of the Ottoman Government. The capitulation privileges of the foreign subjects granted in bygone centuries by the Ottoman rulers to European visitors, who were then few in number, were in reality acts of hospitality. But they have been abused in later times by those in whose favour they were granted. I cannot here enter into the details of the capitulation privileges which<sup>1</sup> fetter the hands of

<sup>1</sup> Under the title "International Fetters," Lord Milner gives a condensed account in his book *England in Egypt*



the Ottoman statesman, which create insurmountable difficulties for the thorough enforcement of the laws, and which seriously impede the adoption of progress and reforms. There was at one time a real possibility of the Porte getting rid, at least partially, of these capitulation privileges, which are really not justified by international law, and some friendly Powers, notably Great Britain, appeared well disposed to discuss the advisability of making some modification in them. In fact, certain concessions were made to the Porte in the carrying out of the sentences passed by it on foreign criminals. These modifications could still be successfully brought about if Turkey could earnestly set to work to reorganise the administration of the country, and to introduce such practical reforms as are necessitated by the actual requirements of the case, and then appeal to the justice and equity of the Great Powers not to insist upon exercising fully the capitulation privileges of their subjects. It was some thirty years ago that the statesmen of the Sublime Porte seriously meant to accomplish the working of these capitulation privileges, and the disgraceful abuse made of them by foreigners.



comply with this great task. But with the beginning of Abd-ul-Hamid's disastrous reign all the previous schemes of the Porte were brought to naught. This capricious Sultan began to rule over an important empire, which required the most delicate handling, in a manner which has never before been seen in the history of any civilised or semi-civilised State, and which can only be paralleled by the mode of governing of some wild tribal chieftain. He proceeded, with a tyrant's zest, to crush the influence of Ottoman statesmen of capability and integrity, and handed over the most important offices of the State to ignorant fanatics and to cosmopolitan upstarts, whose one claim to notice was their dishonourable behaviour. One of the results of the present rule has been that foreign residents in Turkey have naturally clung more firmly to their extra-territorial privileges, and the old capitulation privileges have given rise to new privileges which are by no means based upon the stipulations of the ancient treaties. So one can now see in Constantinople the most amazing anomaly of many centres of Government, all distinct from one another, and all of them utterly unaffected by the sovereignty of



the Porte. Thus the independence of Turkey is quite fictitious nowadays, and Abd-ul-Hamid can only satisfy his lust of tyranny by oppressing the section of his subjects who can expect no outside protection or sympathy.

Throughout these pages I have consistently condemned the misrule of the present Sultan. My feeling against his ways is the stronger because I am sure that, in spite of the ascendancy gained by foreigners in Turkey, she might yet assert and maintain an honest and sound administration, in place of the miserable tyranny which oppresses her now. But as it is, the Foreign Powers, taking advantage of the existing misrule, not only fetter the hands of Turkish statesmen by persistently demanding fresh extra-territorial privileges for their subjects, but also take up, some of them, the cause of those Eastern Christians who are under Ottoman rule, alleging that they are acting in the name of 'humanity.'

Their real motive, however, is that they may use them as a *point d'appui* for their political schemes and designs. Thus these subject populations of Turkey, whose true racial characteristics have often been made clear by



Englishmen who have travelled in the Levant, form a great internal danger to the integrity of the Ottoman empire. The subject populations of Turkey are of course of various distinct nationalities, such as Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, non-Mohammedan Syrians, and so forth. Each of these large communities has its own quarter, churches and denominational schools, national aspirations and separatist ideas. Each community speaks its own language, each native Christian community entertains, nowadays more or less without disguise, sentiments of animosity towards the Osmanlis, and even sympathises with the enemies of the Turkish empire in time of international trouble or war. These sentiments of the Eastern Christians are known to many politicians in this country, and they excuse these treasonable sentiments of their 'Christian brethren' by maintaining that they are the natural outcome of long years of oppression and persecution. This apologetic contention is not based upon an intimate knowledge of the real state of things in the nearer East, nor is it at all justifiable. Of course, the Ottoman empire has long been suffering from intolerable



oppression, but its Christian inhabitants have not been the only sufferers ; on the other hand, many of them have allowed themselves to be the cause of oppression, and have even acted as the right-hand men of the oppressors. If there had ever been a serious persecution particularly directed against the native Christians, there would not now be many Armenians or Greeks left alive in Turkey. In past ages they were entirely at the mercy of the Ottomans ; there was no European Power, and no Concert of Powers, strong enough to stop the conversion or extermination of the non-Mussulman population of the Ottoman empire. There could be no better proof of the tolerant policy of the Osmanlis towards their subject populations than the actual existence at the present day in that country of so many millions of native Christians of all denominations. Moreover, not only have native Christians had their existence assured to them, but also their freedom of conscience, which is amply proved by the fact that their ecclesiastical constitutions, their languages, and their national customs have been respected by the Turks. But this liberal treatment has been abused by the subject populations,



of Turkey. They have never done anything to show their gratitude, and have never displayed any patriotism towards the Ottoman empire. If they were to do so it might perhaps save Turkey from internal dissensions, and from consequent strife, anarchy, and the ruin which stares it in the face. The history of Turkey must have taught the Russians wisdom, for they are careful to insist upon the Russification of their conquered subject populations, and never risk grafting on to their stem a shoot which may turn out to have thorns. The fact is that tolerance towards subject populations of alien race and faith, as shown by Mussulmans, excellent as it may appear to sentimental humanitarians, is a sure way of imperilling the future independence of a nation.

Of all her non-Mussulman subjects Turkey has the greatest reason to be anxious about the Armenians and their separatist movement. The ambition of Armenian agitators is to form an independent State in an important portion of Asia Minor, the backbone of the Ottoman empire. I therefore wish to make a few remarks here on Armenian matters, in particular as, though Armenian affairs may seem to be in



the background at present, political mischief-makers will take up this plaything of theirs again sooner or later.

As I pointed out in the last chapter, among forty-five students of the faculty of law, thirteen were Armenians. Thirteen out of forty-five is proportionately a large number, considering the small number of Armenians relatively to other nationalities of the Ottoman empire. The Armenians are admittedly very industrious people. They won good marks in the entrance examination, and the authorities at the Ministry of Public Instruction would not affix a limit of number, but admitted as many as successfully passed the examination. I doubt, however, after those agitations, if such impartiality has been shown towards the members of that race in all Ottoman institutions. And if not it would not be a matter for surprise when one considers how the Armenians have conducted themselves towards the Empire and their Mussulman compatriots for some time past.

Yes, people in this country heard much about the massacres. Doubtless they were abominable, and doubtless many innocent persons were slaughtered. But it is only common justice



that one should try to find out what were the reasons for attacking Armenians before one judges and condemns those who did so. It is a fact that there was never such an outburst of enmity to the Armenians before; if there had been, there would not be over two millions living in the Ottoman empire now. The Armenians are an adventurous race; they can go anywhere, settle anywhere, and become subject to any State. Some years before the troubles, many of the foreign subject Armenians came over to Turkey, styling themselves Frenchmen, Englishmen and Americans, sometimes in the shape of missionaries, sometimes as teachers. These adventurers, together with the revolutionary Russian subject Armenians, who came mostly from the Caucasus, began to stir up the people of their own race all over Asiatic Turkey in favour of a national independence. The younger generation of the Armenian people, becoming intoxicated with great ideas and dreams of a national kingdom, overlooked the impossibility of establishing any such thing in any particular part of the Ottoman dominions, and did not realise that their people formed a miserable minority everywhere. It



has been maintained by their political sympathisers in England that their agitations were for the purpose of being better governed, and in no way a separatist movement; but this is absurd, and was merely an after-thought. As a matter of fact the Armenians gave loud expression to their new aspirations of having an independent kingdom in Eastern Asia Minor. We heard everywhere from them that the Christian Powers—above all, Great Britain—were going to hand over that portion of the ‘decaying’ Ottoman empire to them, as they had handed over Ottoman territories before to other Christian races of the East. They were simply awaiting the prophesied moment of the partition of Turkey to establish their independence on their share of the divided territory. I myself heard Armenians talking about who were to be the future rulers among their own people. The Turks began to ask themselves such questions as, “Why do these people revolt against us when we suffer from misrule much more than they do, and when, moreover, the official misdeeds are partly due to Armenian jacks-in-office?”<sup>1</sup> The agitation among the Ar-

<sup>1</sup> Many of the Sultan's highly placed officials and spies



menians grew worse and worse every day ; the agitators resorted to the same old method, namely, they tried to provoke the Turkish populace to retaliate on its offenders, hoping that this would be represented in Europe as an outburst of Mussulman fanaticism, and would induce the Powers to intervene, and so hasten the partition. The Turks, or, more widely speaking, the Mussulman population of Asiatic Turkey, were gravely discussing what could be done to check this overbearing and mischievous behaviour. Turkish women and children were exposed to ill-treatment and insult throughout Asia Minor. The Turk's patience is almost inexhaustible, but when you attack his women and children his anger is roused, and nothing on earth can control it,

are of Armenian nationality. It is worthy of note that the Armenian revolutionaries directed their attacks against private individual Turks only ; none of the Sultan's right-hand officials were hurt by them. The reason of this was that they wanted to provoke bloodshed, and by this means invite outside intervention. Moreover, it was manifestly to their advantage that the maladministration of the Sultan and his responsible officials should continue, as under it they were much more likely to find a favourable opportunity for this movement, to say nothing of being sure of external support.



and he saw that the Government of the Sultan was utterly powerless to punish the Armenian agitators and revolutionists of foreign nationality. Did the humanitarian British public know these things? No; it does not care to know anything which might be favourable to the Turks. Have the political journals of this country mentioned the facts I have stated? Of course not, because—to speak plainly—they knew that in the Armenian pie there were the fingers of some of their own politicians. Shortly before the massacres, I heard many Turkish people, who had lived side by side with the Armenians for centuries, saying that it was a mistake to be angry with the Kurds for their treatment of the Armenians in Eastern Asia Minor, and that it was the right thing to crush these people. Then there came the dark days of those terrible massacres. The Armenian revolutionists, who ultimately managed to go abroad scot-free, gave great provocation by throwing dynamite bombs in many places and killing women and children of the Mussulman population. These people could no longer expect that the Government of the Sultan would do anything to settle the agitation and prevent further mischief, so at last



they took the law into their own hands and put down the Armenian movement in the manner we all know. The Sultan, who was eating his heart out at his inability to punish the revolutionary Armenians of foreign extraction, simply connived at the doings of the enraged populace, if he did not actually instigate and encourage them ; but, unfortunately, by his connivance, it was mostly innocent Armenians who perished at the hands of the mob, and only a very few of the guilty ringleaders suffered.

Although the Armenians are hard-working and energetic, they will never recover their former prosperity.

They have always had every opportunity of enriching themselves. They had a firm footing and influential positions in the royal establishments, which made them practically the trustees and paymasters of the revenues of the empire. Their opportunities began with the foundation of the Ottoman power in Asia Minor, which found them a scattered remnant of a race, with their political existence already stamped out by other conquerors, and which, though it did not restore their freedom politically, at least assured to them the advantages



of individual prosperity, protection and toleration. As an instance of what the Turks have been willing to do for the Armenians, I may quote the religious difficulties early in the last century. It was at the beginning of the missionary movement in Europe, and both Protestant and Catholic missionaries poured into Turkey and set about proselytising the Armenians, with more zeal than discretion. The Armenian Patriarch appealed to the Turkish Government to expel these foreign missionaries who were causing trouble in his community, and in response to his appeal the Government at once put great restrictions upon the missionaries, and this in spite of the fact that by so doing it ran the risk of incurring European enmity. In mentioning this I do not say anything against mission work; I merely instance the circumstance to show the tolerance with which the Turks have always treated the Armenians and their religion, and how untrue is the accusation brought against them of systematic religious persecution.

However, I doubt if the Mussulman population will ever place the same confidence in the Armenians again. We do not see now so



many of those flourishing Armenian Pashas in the high Government offices of Turkey as we did before, though they are regaining some of their old hold in Government circles. As a natural result of being out of favour, the race will not probably find it so easy a matter to gain admission to the educational institutions of the State.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A NEW COSTUME AND A NEW CAREER.

I adopt European dress—The standard of civilisation—English clothes 'made in Austria'—European dress first adopted under Sultan Mahmud—My vain attempts to get an appointment—Requisite qualifications for Government employment, bribery and espionage—The only livelihood possible for educated men—I become a lawyer—I penetrate high official quarters.

WHEN I had passed the final examination in the law college I began to attend the Courts to see and learn the actual working of the forms of the procedures. I now grew to dislike having to go to the Courts and Government offices in the *Ulema* costume, which I still wore. In fact, even in my class at the college there were only a few persons belonging to *mad-rassehs*, and they alone were attired in the semi-religious dress, and the contrast between



our appearance and the rest in the class, who were attired in ordinary civilian dress, seemed to us to make us look old-fashioned. So, like most of my countrymen, I was seized with the ambition of appearing up-to-date, and of dressing in the more modern manner; that is to say, European costume in all but the fez. Before I could do this, however, and become, so to speak, an ordinary layman, I had to leave the life of the *madrasseh* altogether, for the people in those ancient institutions regard the discarding of the academical turban and long cloak, and the adoption of European clothes, as a renunciation of the profession. Any one who ventures to do this forfeits his right to a lodging in the *madrasseh*. I did not know where to go after leaving my *madrasseh*, as Turkish families cannot take any stranger into their houses as a boarder, while to go into a Greek or Armenian family would not do for a young Mussulman, for many reasons. So I hired two rooms in an inn, which was as filthy as these inns always are. I went to the European quarter of Constantinople and bought a suit of clothes from one of the numerous clothiers, who are mostly Austrian Jews, and



who bring the clothes ready-made from Austria. Their goods are ridiculously cheap, but the tailoring and the material are extremely bad. It is a proverb in Constantinople that when you buy a suit of clothes from these Austrian shops and put it on, it will be worn out before you can cross over the Golden Horn Bridge back to Stamboul. Curiously enough, some of these Austrians try to pass their goods off as of English manufacture, as the English-made goods have a better reputation than the Austrian even in Turkey.

But, bad though they were, I was well content with my new clothes, as this was a step forward in satisfaction of my craze to dress as the Europeans did. It is a fact that most people who adopt this form of dress in the nearer East look upon those who have not adopted it, or do not desire to adopt it, as incapable of acquiring 'civilised' habits. Snobbish as it is, no doubt, this idea is not without reason. A few years ago, when there was an anti-Turkish agitation in England, I observed in some of the Radical papers remarks to the effect that, while the Eastern Christians who had been liberated from the Turkish yoke had adopted civilised



methods, the Turks themselves seemed to be incapable of progress or civilisation. In reality, these 'Europeanised' Eastern Christians are no more civilised than the turbaned villagers of Asia Minor; their imitation of civilised methods and habits is merely superficial; but they manage to make themselves look like Europeans; and the world passes its judgment on most matters by surface evidence. Not long ago I saw an article in the *Spectator*, dealing with the incapacity of dark races to adopt civilised manners, and, as one of the examples, it was cited that the late Midhat Pasha used to hate some aspects of European costume, especially evening dress. It was a revelation to me that Midhat and his nation were included in the category of the dark races, and it was also a surprise to me that the *Spectator* did not remember that many Englishmen of perfectly civilised habits and high culture hate some of the grotesque forms of European costume. It was, however, this sort of feeling among the majority of Europeans that made us wish to imitate them, at least outwardly, so that we might not be accused of being unfitted for civilised



ways. If the Turkish Government would make the women of harems discard their 'barbarous' veils, and go about like European women, and urge all its subjects to put on European costumes, and also hats instead of the fez or turban, its action would doubtless be hailed in many quarters as the real beginning of the civilisation of Turkey.

Sultan Mahmud II., the exterminator of the Janissaries, was the first man who perceived this prejudiced feeling of Europe some eighty years ago. He knew that the undying hostility of the nations of Western Europe against his empire was simply because Turkey was not a Christian State.<sup>1</sup> As he could not accept any form of the religions of Christendom, he thought

<sup>1</sup> In this connection an anecdote is related in Turkey which, whether true or not, I will quote here. A Turkish diplomatist of the past generation paid a visit to the Pope of his time. During the interview the Pope said, "I am aware of the good points of your people, yet you are so unpopular in Christendom. In every international dispute Europe always regards you as in the wrong. Do you understand the reason of this universal hostility?" The diplomatist replied, "Because we are not Christians." "Exactly," said the Pontiff. "Then why do you not embrace Christianity?" Upon this the diplomatist made the following undiplomatic remark, "The Christians believe



he would lessen the old hostility of Europe—which must be lessened if Turkey in Europe were to continue to exist—by imitating, at least outwardly, the other peoples of Europe. So he ordered all the officials of the State to adopt European attire, and himself was the first to give up the old head-dress or turban and the long robe, and to replace them by a modified kind of European uniform. The most conservative and religious section of the Turks raised a howl of protest against this measure, but they could not support their case by any valid canonical law. The tradition that “He who makes himself look like the infidels is one of them,” which is attributed to the Prophet, was proved to be spurious. But, in spite of his innovations, Sultan Mahmud II. could not adopt the European hat, as his fanatical opponents discovered that the Prophet explicitly prohibited his followers from wearing the head-dress of unbelievers, which was at that time three-cornered in shape, the corners signifying the belief in the ‘Trinity,’

in Trinity, and we believe in Unity. Some of us are growing tired of worshipping even one God. How, then, could you expect us to worship three?”



a belief which is repudiated by Unitarian Mohammedanism. The objectors, moreover, maintained that a man could not put his forehead on the ground in prostration during worship with any form of European hat. So the Sultan, instead of taking the European head-dress as well, adopted the fez, which was worn mostly by the Greeks of the Mediterranean Archipelago.

I do not say that Mahmud II. did unwisely in discarding his forefathers' turbaned crown and long, furred robe. But it was a great pity that he did not retain the ancient national costumes for special ceremonial occasions at least, if only for antiquarian interest. In looking at pictures and drawings illustrating the olden days, one cannot help admiring those gorgeous old Turkish dresses. Persons of every class and profession had their big turban of a particular shape, their long robe, wide trousers, and so forth, and in these costumes looked not only picturesque, but also imposing and dignified. Ever since the first change, people in Turkey have been adopting the European style of costume, and those who now retain the old attire are only the humbler



class of people in the provinces, tradesmen, peasants, and the class of the *Ulema*.

Following my example, four other men among the students of the law college who came from *madrassehs* also changed their costume. Of course, they had also to leave their *madrassehs* on account of their conduct.

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After I had secured my exemption from military service, and had got over the protracted final examination in the law college, I found that my real troubles in life were only just beginning, for the problem of making a position for myself lay before me. I was now entirely dependent upon my own labours to earn my bread. As I mentioned at the beginning of the book, we had no longer any hope of recovering our confiscated lands, and the little instalments advanced to me periodically out of the revenue of those lands during our lawsuit with the authorities, which lasted fifteen years, were now very irregularly paid. In fact, I was becoming thoroughly disgusted by the fact that we had to make the most



humble entreaties to the arrogant officials of the Sultan in order to persuade them to advance the small sums they owed to us. I wished to obtain some appointment, either in the Courts or the Ministry of Justice, but there seemed little chance of my doing so. As I have been endeavouring to show throughout these chapters, the administration in the reign of Abd-ul-Hamid has been the most corrupt that our unfortunate country has ever known. No one, however highly qualified he may be, can get any employment in any Government department unless he is connected with some highly-placed creature of the Sultan, or unless he is able to bribe high officials, or is cunning enough to concoct some grave political charge against others and denounce them to the tyrant at Yildiz Kiosk. Those who do this last service are known as 'Palace spies.' I had no relation in the Sultan's palace who might have obtained a Government appointment for me; and had, of course, no money to lay out in bribery, and so purchase an appointment, while the trade of a spy was entirely repugnant to my feelings. I may be asked why, instead of striving to get official employment, I did not



try to find other work. The fact is that official employment is nowadays the only way in Turkey in which persons of any education can earn a livelihood. In order to explain this I must give some account of the nature of officialdom under the Sultan's bureaucracy.

As the Sultan has never relaxed his determination to crush the power and the influence of the well-to-do families, an independent existence has now been made impossible for them. Therefore everyone of birth and education must depend upon a Government salary for his maintenance, and so be at the mercy of the Sultan, who has gradually and systematically obtained control of all the financial resources of Turkey. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing in Turkey as a distinct aristocracy. High titled officials of the State may impress foreign observers as being members of an aristocracy, but in reality those officials can be raised even from people of the lowest station in life. There have always been, nevertheless, good old families in the provinces, who, though they received the appreciation and respect of the masses, had no



pretensions to any actual superiority over their dependants. The governing factions, who were appointed and promoted by the central Government, were quite distinct from either the rich or the poor populations of most Turkish provinces. This state of society existed up to the beginning of the present reign. When Abd-ul-Hamid began to establish his personal rule, and founded the present bureaucracy, he saw a danger in the independent manner of life of the old families, and in their democratic and friendly relations with the poorer classes.

At first he tried to demoralise those ancient families by conferring upon them official titles and decorations, hoping thus to impress them with an idea of rank, which would bring attendant jealousies, and make them strive hard to gain higher rank and decorations than the rest of their fellows. Besides this, the Sultan acquired large tracts of land in the fertile districts throughout the empire, and, as a step in his policy of wholesale acquisition, the lands and properties of the local magnates were gradually taken possession of on some pretext or other by the administrators of the Civil List.



Thus it was that those who had once been independent landowners received official titles, and became part and parcel of the Palace official world. They now depend almost entirely for their living upon salaries paid out of the public treasury, which treasury is supplied for the most part by taxes extorted from the poorer provincials and peasant proprietors.

At present there are only two ways in which Turkish subjects can obtain a livelihood. Either they must be content to pocket their pride, and labour as workmen, small tradesmen, ordinary craftsmen, farm labourers, and so forth, or else they must somehow get a Government appointment. A man of education must make a Government salary his ambition in life, and must direct all his energies to increasing it. It therefore follows that the number of unnecessary officials in Turkey is enormous, and consequently their salaries are small, and also constantly in arrears. Even the payment of a salary due to an official is a matter for an appeal to the Sultan's benevolence; any increase is naturally even more so. Only those who are able to show loyalty to the



person of the Sultan get their salaries increased and their arrears paid. The best form of showing the required loyalty for an official is, as before stated, to spy upon others, and denounce them as intriguing against his sovereignty. Those who cannot or will not show their loyalty in this way are soon reduced to the point of starvation, if not exiled or imprisoned, or condemned to death. There is no other means of earning money for a Turk of education in his own country nowadays. No one can venture to carry on any commerce or any legitimate money-making enterprise independently, nor can he establish any business relations with the outside world. He would be instantly harassed by the lying and intriguing Palace spies, and denounced to the Sultan as carrying on some treasonable negotiations, under the guise of doing business. All kinds of industrial, commercial, and financial combinations are most stringently forbidden to Turks. Even two men cannot make an association for any innocent and reasonable business purpose, as such a proceeding would doubtless be reported as the promotion of a conspiracy. If a man is accused of doing such



a thing, he has no chance of proving his innocence. The spies have a perfectly free hand, and nothing they may report is censured, however monstrous or improbable it may be ; in fact, the more extraordinary and unlikely it is, the more the spy who brings it will be rewarded for his zeal.

There was therefore no way in which I could obtain official employment. But my diploma from the law college qualified me to practise as a barrister, so to that profession I determined to devote my energies, although even in this liberal profession no independence is possible, on account of its being under the complete control of officialdom.

Among my fellow law students who received their diploma at the same time as myself only a few contemplated practising at the Bar ; the remainder sought Government employment. Those who wished to earn their living as lawyers had not the necessary private means for starting in that profession. I was, however, more fortunate than most. At this period of my career, when I enjoyed much leisure, I used to attend at the office of a well known Turkish publisher and littérateur, who has now been



exiled to Konia, in Asiatic Turkey, whose office was called 'Imprimerie Ebuzzia,' after his own name. There I read and corrected proofs and contributed to his magazine. This was, of course, before the Sultan's great literary persecution, which resulted in the closing of several printing offices, the suppression of several journals, the burning of many books, and the banishment of many persons connected with the literary world. In this office I made the acquaintance of a European, who was an old resident in Constantinople, and was acting as correspondent to the *Times*. This gentleman and his European friends, who had some business in the matter of concessions to settle with the Turkish Government, occasionally entrusted me with the drawing up of their Turkish documents, and with interviewing officials on their behalf. The documentary work I received from them enabled me from time to time to have access not only to several high officials appointed by the Palace, but also to the Imperial Palace itself. I thus had many opportunities of observing closely the way in which the ruling clique in Constantinople performs its duties. I will now give some



description of the real centre of authority in the Turkish empire, which, I fancy, has never been properly understood even by those English politicians who are interested in the eternal Eastern Question.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SUBLIME PORTE AND YILDIZ KIOSK.

The Porte the old centre of authority—The Ministers' present degraded position—A conversational opening—Meaning of 'Yildiz Kiosk'—The Sultan's Armenian appearance—The reasons for his living at Yildiz—A fortified palace—Its gardens and forest—The 'Charitable Hotel-keeper'—The apartments of the palace—Governing bodies in it—A cosmopolitan crew—Expenses of the Household—The Sultan's Civil List managed by Armenians.

BEFORE the reign of the present Sultan the centre of the ruling power in Turkey was the 'Sublime Porte,' but since his accession, Yildiz Kiosk (his palace) has absorbed every scrap of authority in the country. Although, in diplomatic and journalistic language, the 'Porte,' or 'Sublime Porte,' is still used as the name for the Government of Turkey, it can no longer be regarded as a correct one. Before describing Yildiz Kiosk, I should like to state what



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the 'Sublime Porte' means and represents. 'Sublime Porte' is the French translation of the Turkish term '*Babi Aali*.' *Bab* means 'door,' and *Aali* 'superior.' Every Government seat is called the 'door' in Turkey, for the reason that the door of every office of the State is supposed to be always open to any who may wish to enter to seek justice and redress. The most important of all Government offices (that of the Grand Vizier and the three principal Ministers, who are the President of the Councils of State, the Foreign Minister, and the Minister of the Interior, with their respective departmental functionaries) is known as 'Sublime Porte'; whereas the offices of the other Ministers, such as Justice, Finance, Public Works, Public Instruction, War, etc., which are situated in separate localities, being considered comparatively less important, are only called the 'Door.'

The Council of the Ministers holds its meetings under the presidency of the Grand Vizier at the 'Sublime Porte.' Theoretically, the affairs of State are still superintended by the Ministers, but in reality nowadays they simply supervise such scraps of State business as may



be handed over to them by the Palace. The present Cabinet Ministers of Turkey are either men whose principle and ability are not of the sort to inspire respect, or else weak nonentities, who are merely appointed to carry out without question the wishes of the Palace. They are all appointed and protected by some influential courtier of the Sultan. It is an open secret that beyond reading and talking over the papers sent to them by the Palace, the Cabinet Ministers dare not discuss or settle any matter affecting the vital interests of the country on their own account; and it is also a matter of common knowledge that the conversation of the Ministers in Council is chiefly about the weather and other safe, unexciting topics. The favourite conversational opening of the late Sheikh-ul-Islam in the Council, as is well known in Constantinople, was:—"Under the benevolent auspices of his Imperial Majesty, our august Master, the weather is fine to-day." None of the Ministers venture to make a statement or give an opinion on any political situation. Like their subordinates, the Ministers are in honour bound to spy on one another. In short, the Cabinet Ministers are now mere ciphers of the Court.



The 'Sublime Porte' was first recognised as the centre of the ruling power of the Ottoman empire when such statesmen were in power as Resheed Pasha (who was Grand Vizier during the Crimean campaign), Aali Pasha, Fuad Pasha (who accompanied the late Sultan Aziz when the latter visited this country), and Midhat Pasha, who compelled the Sultan to sanction a Representative Assembly, and who was afterwards done to death in his exile in Táif near Mecca. The reason why Abd-ul-Hamid preserved the 'Sublime Porte,' although he has deprived it of every vestige of authority, is that he found the Ministers useful as scapegoats at various periods of his reign, when he had to face important political crises. The Sultan has until quite recently succeeded in hoodwinking even the representatives of the European Powers, and making them believe that the authority which had to settle International disputes was the 'Sublime Porte.' Thus he has avoided the possibility of personal responsibility for his misrule being brought home to him, and causing diplomatic pressure to bear directly on himself. The buildings which contain the offices of the 'Sublime Porte' are



situated in the Stamboul quarter of Constanti-  
nople, and are close to St Sophia.

Having explained what the Sublime Porte once was and now is, and having also pointed out that it has ceased to be even in a figurative sense the Ottoman Government, I will now give an account of Yildiz Kiosk. Yildiz means 'star' in Turkish. The majestic hill which is situated on the European side of the Bosphorus near the Marmora end of the Strait is called the Yildiz. The word 'Kiosk,' or, as it is spelt in Turkish, 'Koshq,' means both castle and cottage. I believe it was Sultan Abd-ul-Mejid who built the castle on the summit of the hill and called it 'Yildiz Koshq.' The story runs that this castle was built as a residence for a favourite lady of that Sultan, to whose presence in the harem of the palace his wife and mother objected. Gossip also relates that she was an Armenian, and the present Sultan is said to be her son. Although the physiognomy of Abd-ul-Hamid is very similar to that of a typical Armenian, and his personal characteristics are more Armenian than Turkish, this story rests on a very slight foundation.

Twenty-six years ago the present Sultan



transferred the royal seat to the house at Yildiz, which was then a mere cottage. Many reasons were adduced for his changing his dwelling so soon after his accession. The ostensible reason was that the air on the lofty Yildiz hill was much finer than that round the old palace, which lay on the damp shores of the Bosphorus. But the real reason was that Yildiz was impregnable, and that there his person would be safely protected against any attempt to overthrow him. During the last six-and-twenty years he has never relaxed his efforts to make his home at Yildiz safer and safer. The forest extending from the top of the Yildiz hill down to the shores of the Bosphorus is surrounded with high and massive walls. I have never had any opportunity of penetrating within the forest. It is said to be perpetually guarded by numerous sentinels round the walls. Some years ago a whole battalion of sappers worked inside the forest of Yildiz Palace for months. According to what I gathered from the reports of the soldiers, the forest is mined in several directions, and there must be a thorough workable system of subterranean passages, for what purpose it is not difficult to surmise.



I visited the outside of these barracks at a time when it was occasionally possible for strangers to walk in the vicinity of the Yildiz Palace. There are many blocks of barracks, thirty or forty yards apart from one another, all along the line of the wall. In these barracks are quartered troops of various nationalities—Arab, Albanian, and Turkish. There is little friendliness or intercourse between the men of the different battalions; but all these simple-minded privates of the guard have been so carefully and systematically inspired with unhesitating loyalty towards their 'father,' as they call the Sultan, that they would quite willingly sacrifice the last drop of their blood in the defence of his precious life. Beyond these barracks there are hills and valleys, which are also extensively guarded by blockhouses and sentinels. Some years ago, when the Turkish malcontents became restless, a young officer in the Sultan's guard drew a careful plan of the palace and its defences, in which he showed its vulnerable points. This plan was published some years ago by the Turkish agitators in Geneva, with the title "Instructions to be carried out in the assault on Yildiz Palace." It is said that the



publication of this plan caused the Sultan to alter all the defences of Yildiz.

The ~~harem~~ apartments and various small but luxurious ~~kiosks~~ are situated in the interior of the forest, which is said to be laid out in beautiful flower-gardens, roads, lakes and canals. There are several detached pavilions in the palace gardens; one of the most splendid of them is said to be the one in which the Sultan entertains his princely foreign guests. The Emperor of Germany lodged in it during his two visits to Constantinople. The Sultan is always eager to accommodate his royal visitors within the establishment of Yildiz, so that he may not be compelled to leave the palace to call upon them. It is well known that he takes the utmost care to make them comfortable and to entertain them well. It is for this reason that he has obtained the nickname in certain discontented quarters of 'the Charitable Hotel-keeper.' The Sultan always enjoys his sport and takes his exercise in his palace forest. One of his means of recreation is the Yildiz opera-house, in which he, with his children or with his foreign guests, patronises the drama, in which he takes



a keen interest. It is worthy of remark that, while a strict censorship and a rigorous police make the progress of dramatic art among his subjects almost impossible, the Sultan's own theatre is fitted with all the latest improvements.

The buildings in which the officials and officers of the court, and the army of household attendants (as we may call them) live, are situated at the highest part of the Yildiz forest, while at the opposite end, at the foot of the forest, almost on the shore, is the Tcharagan Palace, where ex-Sultan Murad, Abd-ul-Hamid's mysterious and strictly-guarded captive, is confined. No human being who is not attached to the guard of the captive can approach the latter palace. The bureaus of the officials and officers on the top of the hill are built just outside the walled garden. The passage between the official residences and offices and the Sultan's own quarters in the interior is called the 'Mabeyn,' an Arabic word, which means a space between two objects. It is for that reason that the seraglio of the Sultan is figuratively called the Mabeyn, so that it may be distinguished from those of other



princely palaces. In front of these departmental offices there is another valley, which was formerly inhabited chiefly by Turkish and Armenian families. The houses of these people have all been appropriated by the Civil List, with the view of making the distance between the palace at Yildiz and the people's quarters as great as possible. Beyond this valley there is another high hill, which is covered with the private houses of the court dignitaries. The object of the Sultan in building these houses for his officials on his own account was that he might prevent the Europeans of Pera from coming into possession of land in the direction of Yildiz, and in this way extending their quarters into the vicinity of the palace.

With a few exceptions, the courtiers and principal secretaries of the Sultan receive any business connected with any branch of State affairs, and deal with it after submitting it to him. For instance, there is a military council in the palace consisting of highly-favoured staff officers, who decide on all important military matters, although there is still an over-staffed War Ministry, which, by the established statute of the Empire, has to look after the affairs of



the army. In the palace a highly important espionage and police bureau is maintained, though the old Ministry of the Police, with its numerous officials, is still in existence. In the palace reside those advisers to the Sultan whose business it is to attend to matters connected with Mussulman affairs, and to see that the Sultan's position as Caliph in the Mohammedan world is maintained; yet the old office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, which theoretically should be in charge of such religious matters, is still in existence, with its many officials. There is a political and translation department at Yildiz, which is entrusted with the examination of such of the contents of the political press and political literature of Europe as may deal with Turkish matters, and which makes suggestions on diplomatic affairs, though these things are supposed to be done by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Sublime Porte. The postal and telegraphic office of Yildiz Palace is the greatest and busiest of all post-offices in Turkey. All governors, commanders, agents, ambassadors and emissaries communicate directly with the palace through this post-office.

The men who compose the Sultan's immedi-



ate circle, and who are ruling the country, are of many nationalities; some of them are Europeans. Anyone who knows the origin of these people would not hesitate to agree with me when I say that in the present reign the power and rule of Turkey is not in the hands of real Turks.

Hundreds of officials, officers, and retainers actually live on the premises of the palace. On one occasion I saw dinner being served out to the household of the palace. Numerous servants hurried about in all directions, carrying on their heads large wooden trays full of dishes. The number of the chefs and assistant cooks is known to be over two hundred. The working expenses of the palace are roughly estimated to be somewhere about £5000 a day. This enormous sum is, of course, paid out of the Sultan's Civil List. The revenues of the Civil List are very great, and they are drawn from many sources. Nearly all the estates and farms of high value, and most of the fertile districts in Anatolia and Syria, and more especially in the provinces of Baghdad and on the Persian Gulf, are now entirely at the disposal of the Sultan, and constitute the source



of his private income. Moreover, as every vestige of power is nowadays in his hands, he can draw as much money as he requires from the State exchequer at the Finance Ministry.

The fixed income of the sovereign is supposed to be £50,000 a month. The Sublime Porte had at one time the courage to reduce it to £30,000, but, as I explained before, the Porte is now only nominally existent. For the last twenty years or more, during which the revenues of the Civil List have increased enormously, the officials at the head of the department have, without exception, been of Armenian nationality. The first of these Armenian officials, a certain Aghob Pasha, was the man who suggested to the Sultan the idea of appropriating the property of the prominent Mussulmans in the province. The Civil List is never in need of money, as is the public exchequer of Turkey, yet many officials who serve solely for the palace, and do practically nothing for the public welfare, get their salaries from the public exchequer. The sum which the exchequer has to contribute to the fund of the Palace espionage system alone is estimated to be £90,000 a year. Besides the expenses of the



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